

On to next round

China's Zheng Qinwen wins first-round match at US Open

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Crafting furniture a career steeped in heritage, tradition

THE HANDS OF TIME, PAGE 8-9



Shared growth

Funding in tech, products and services benefit Global South

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XI'S VISION | XIZANG DEVELOPMENT

Pairing-up aid to Xizang bearing fruit

Central authorities ensure continuous support for region's development, people's well-being

By CUI JIA
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Liu Haixia, a doctor from the critical care medicine department of Beijing Youan Hospital, said she is proud to be one of the medical experts from other parts of China who have gone to aid hospitals in the Xizang autonomous region, because they have made a difference that has saved lives.

Liu was among the 21 medical experts from hospitals in Beijing who went to assist the People's Hospital of Lhasa in 2021.

Since August 2015, teams of medical experts from a number of different fields have been sent by provinces and cities to raise the overall level of healthcare offered by hospitals in Xizang.

Liu said that this model, in which the teams of experts are paired with specific hospitals, allows the doctors from different departments to work together to introduce new medical technology, conduct complicated operations and improve the training of doctors in Xizang.

"The local people really trust us. And they now can have many diseases treated on their doorstep, which is in fact lifesaving," said Liu,

who spent a year at the hospital in Lhasa, the regional capital.

Nyima, deputy director of the People's Hospital of Lhasa, said that in 2015 it only had 240 beds available but the number has now reached 550, adding that the number of operations performed at the hospital in 2023 had more than doubled compared with 2015.

"Thanks to the doctors from Beijing who come to assist us, we can now perform more complicated operations and treat patients with complicated diseases. Their continuous support also means that the local people are able to receive quality and convenient healthcare services all the time," Nyima said.

Improving Xizang's healthcare system is only one aspect that the pairing-up assistance program aims to achieve. The program, which has been carried out for 30 years, has tremendously promoted the region's social and economic development and significantly improved the lives of local residents, according to people involved in the program.

In 1994, the central government made a strategic decision to rally national support for Xizang.

See *Xizang*, page 3

Flood of mud



Rescue teams and residents search for victims buried in mud on Sunday after a flash flood hit the village of Rua located at the foot of Mount Gamalama in Ternate, Indonesia's eastern North Maluku Province. The deluge cut off the main road and access to the village and buried dozens of buildings under mud. At least 19 people were killed and seven others injured in the incident. AZZAM RISQULLAH / AFP

Former head of Malawi hails win-win cooperation

By MO JINGXI
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The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation plays an important role in bringing together China and African countries for discussions that help forge win-win cooperation, allowing both sides to grow together, said Joyce Banda, former president of Malawi.

Speaking to China Daily ahead of the 2024 Summit of the FOCAC, which is scheduled to be held from Sept 4 to 6 in Beijing, Banda said that such gatherings are also crucial for people who doubt China-Africa cooperation, allowing both sides to grow together, said Joyce Banda, former president of Malawi.

As the two sides continue to take their relationship forward, the politician said it is important for Africa to learn from China's experience in creating a peaceful environment that enables the nation's transformation and tremendous economic growth. Banda said China has done a



Joyce Banda

good job in addressing the concerns of people across the board — from youths to women and the elderly. "I see President Xi Jinping often in the rural areas of China talking to people that are underprivileged," she said.

Banda said she is grateful to the Chinese government for starting a special program for the young people of Africa, who account for about 60 percent of the continent's population. "The majority of Africans ... are young people below the age of 30. ... We must involve them, because conflict is started in many countries by people that are not happy, people that have no hope, people that are not satisfied," she said.

The former Malawian president, who was a businesswoman before

she made her foray into politics, said it is very important for China to forge trade partnerships with Africa in fields such as mining, agriculture, and information and communications technology.

"When we do trade together, we will grow our economies and we will create jobs," she said, adding that the availability of more opportunities in Africa would help prevent its young population from migrating to Europe, often illegally, in search of employment.

Africa, with its population of 1.7 billion people, can also be a huge market for Chinese products, Banda noted. "Nobody is going to come and tell us that we can't buy from China. The onus is on us," she said, criticizing some European countries' ban on the import of Chinese-made products.

Banda's connection with China started as early as 1995, when she made a visit to Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women. The trip inspired the then businesswoman

so much that she decided to establish herself in a leadership position in Malawi and help her country as well as the whole of Africa prosper.

From a member of parliament to foreign minister to vice-president, Banda steadily climbed the political ladder, and finally became the first female president of Malawi in 2012. China and Malawi established diplomatic relations in 2007, and the two sides signed a document on Belt and Road cooperation in 2022, on the 15th anniversary of their ties.

Thanks to cooperation frameworks such as the Belt and Road Initiative and China's help, Malawi now has a parliament building, a stadium, a university and a network of roads, Banda said.

"If you have no roads, you can't develop. If you have no means of transportation, you can't develop. If you go into countries like mine, it would be very easy for you to see what the People's Republic of China has done," she added.

An acquired taste



Customers shop for fresh durians imported from Malaysia in Zhengzhou, Henan province, after a batch of 15 metric tons of the popular tropical fruit arrived on Sunday at Zhengzhou Xinzheng International Airport. XIA QINGHUA / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

HIT CHINESE VIDEO GAME BUILDS PRIDE, SUBDUES PREJUDICE

Black Myth: Wukong counters Western production dominance with tales of homegrown heroes

By ZHANG ZHOUXIANG
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It's not excessive to say that I have been expecting a game like this my entire life," said 39-year-old Kang Jianxiang, while manipulating the hero in the Black Myth: Wukong video game to stand on the top of his magic staff and launch a heavy attack on his enemies.

He said he had not expected the game's stunning visual effects or the precise modeling of the characters, which are both excellent according to player ratings of the game.

Kang, who has played video

In-depth

games since he was eight years old, said Black Myth: Wukong is the first influential Chinese game based on a Chinese legend that he has played on an international gaming platform such as Steam.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, personal computers were new to China and a luxury for the majority of families.

See *Game*, page 2

China-Vietnam relationship: A pillar of regional stability

The strengthening partnership between China and Vietnam, built on a solid foundation of pragmatic cooperation and mutual respect, stands out as a stabilizing force in Asia, vital for regional peace, sustainable economic growth and geopolitical stability. The visit to China by General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and Vietnamese President To Lam from Aug 18 to 20 is likely to further consolidate ties between the two nations.

The China-Vietnam relation is a compelling example of how nations with a complex and sometimes even contentious history can forge a forward-looking and win-win relationship based on pragmatism, economic cooperation and goodwill.

Since normalizing relations in 1991, both countries have pursued a pragmatic and mutually beneficial path. Today, China and Vietnam are among the most globally competi-

WORLD WATCH

By Wilson Lee Flores

tive economies, which have successfully eradicated mass poverty and social injustices. Their partnership has evolved into a multidimensional relationship that encompasses trade, investment, infrastructure development and tourism, and heads toward a joint community of shared future. Such cooperation not only fuels the dynamic economic engines of both countries but also enhances the broader stability and prosperity of Asia.

Infrastructure development, particularly in the realm of modernizing rail links, illustrates the depth of this cooperation. The colonial-era railways, plagued by mismatched gauges and outdated technology, have long hindered seamless con-

nectivity between the two nations. Recognizing this bottleneck, China has provided significant financial and technological support to Vietnam, facilitating the modernization of these critical links. This not only symbolizes the nations' shared commitment to overcoming historical challenges but also highlights their strategic vision of enhancing regional connectivity.

The visit by Lam further advances these efforts, with 14 agreements signed covering various fields, including infrastructure, healthcare and other critical sectors. This visit, strategically timed and diplomatically significant, underscores both nations' focus on collaboration over conflict, particularly in an era of rising global uncertainty.

The deepening economic ties between China and Vietnam over the decades have become increasingly significant in the face of global challenges. Vietnam has

emerged as a key manufacturing hub for Chinese companies seeking to diversify their production bases, further entwining the two economies. This economic integration not only strengthens regional supply chains but also bolsters the resilience of both nations against external economic shocks.

Chinese private investment in Vietnam has surged, driving the country's rapid industrialization and modernization. This influx of capital and expertise is a direct result of the strategic choices made by the leaders of both nations, who have prioritized economic cooperation as a means of ensuring long-term stability and prosperity.

While the China-Vietnam partnership is robust, it is not without its challenges, particularly concerning territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

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PAGE TWO

Game: Epic cultural showcase woos world



People watch a gamer try the *Black Myth: Wukong* game at a shopping mall in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Thursday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Visitors view Simen Pagoda, which is featured in the game, in Jinan, Shandong province, on Saturday. WANG CAIYI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



People take photos in front of a poster of *Black Myth: Wukong* at the Game Science display during Gamescom 2024 in Cologne, Germany, on Thursday. ZHANG FAN / XINHUA



A gamer tries the action role-playing game in Tianjin. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In the game, developed by US company Westwood Studios, Soviet troops that occupy New York City can fire at unarmed civilians, while US troops that invade the Ural Mountains in Russia broadcast from trucks, appealing to residents to follow them.

"Those behind the game development team try to leave each and every player with the impression that the US military promotes humanitarianism and bravely defends peace all over the world," Gu said. "That's apparently not the truth, even when viewed by US media outlets, but they can repeat such misinformation a hundred million times to players around the world and always get some believers."

This is a key reason why there have always been voices calling for Chinese teams to develop games based on Chinese literature and promote them around the world.

At the annual session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee in 2023, member Guo Yuanquan, who is also vice dean of the School of Culture and Communication at the Capital University of Economics and Business, called for the domestic video game industry to promote its products overseas to gain global influence. This was despite popular domestically developed games then seldom having an impact overseas.

It was not until *Honor of Kings*, a smartphone game that allows users to fight as heroes in teams, was successful in 2023 that Chinese games with Chinese heroes finally gained international standing.

By July, the game had over 50 million registered users worldwide from more than 160 countries and regions.

Then came the recent phenomenon of *Black Myth: Wukong*, based on the Chinese classic novel *Journey to the West*, which tells how a monkey born out of natural forces acquired skills and guarded his master on a journey to a Buddhist mountain to get holy scriptures.

From the game's official release on Aug 20 until Aug 22, the maximum number of global players on the Steam platform was 2.2 million, 2.35 million and 2.4 million respectively. The number of online players has exceeded those for popular games such as *Counter-Strike 2*, *Dota 2*, and *Elden Ring*, and are second only to the record set by *PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds*.

By the evening of its release day, over 3 million copies of the game had been sold on Steam's international video game digital distribution service. By Friday evening, the total number of copies sold exceeded 10 million. Another 1.5 million copies were sold on WeGame, Epic! and PlayStation services, with total sales exceeding 1.5 billion yuan (\$210.3 million).

On X, Meta, formerly Facebook, and Quora, a question quickly spread among international players — who is that Chinese monkey character in *Black Myth: Wukong* and what's the story behind him?

Cultural export

Black Myth: Wukong has proved so popular that a question about its was raised at a Ministry of Foreign Affairs news conference on Aug 21. Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said while she knew little about video games, judging from its name and the fact that it is derived from *Journey to the West*, she believes *Black Myth: Wukong* showcases

from outerspace to ancient dragons hiding in deep underground holes, all had one thing in common — speaking English.

"The whole gaming world was invented by English-speaking teams based on English-language literature to serve English-speaking customers," was the answer that netizens agreed with the most.

While many of the games are played in English and have cultural roots in Western culture, a vast number of them are produced in Japan, which is considered the creator and innovator of video games.

Patriot games

Gu Kai, a senior games producer who founded Armored Horse Studio, made the popular game *Glorious Mission* with the support of the People's Liberation Army. "Prejudices easily get hidden in video games as a cultural product," Gu said, citing *Red Alert 2* as an example.

the attractiveness of traditional Chinese culture.

Many voices on Sina Weibo called it "an excellent showcase for a Chinese cultural export."

Feng Ji, founder and head of Shenzhen-based Game Science, the developer of *Black Myth: Wukong*, said his team did not set out to represent Chinese culture when they started the project in 2018.

"For us, it's natural that traditional Chinese literature, which is based on Oriental philosophy and values that are appealing to the world, has much space to explore," he said.

"We are naturally expressing Chinese culture. For us, that's a rational thing to do, so we have done it."

It was an instinctive decision to choose *Journey to the West* as the basis for the game, he said.

"When we Chinese see the image, or hear the name of Sun Wukong (the Monkey King), or even hear the music of the TV series *Journey to the West*, we have a unique feeling," Feng said. "We (the company employees) have been following our hearts to create games that touch our souls," he added.

Wukong's popularity with both domestic and global audiences is another reason the Monkey King was selected as the hero of the game.

The story of Wukong is known by some people in the West.

Dota, a popular game based on the Western-style fictional magic of *WarCraft III*, included the Monkey King's magical staff in its divine weapons list and added him to the game's pool of heroes in recent years. *Dota 2*, the game's successor, continued the practice.

On YouTube, videos about the Monkey King with English audio or English subtitles were popular before the game's release, with some of them viewed as many as 4 million times.

Wukong's story has also attracted Western scholars such as Jim R. McClanahan who studied anthropology at Miami University. His online articles about Wukong give intricate details about the Monkey King, such as his immortal breath being able to save souls, or his equivalent birth year in the Gregorian calendar.

Don't forget its tech

However, Feng says fine literature isn't the sole basis for a good video game.

"Although *Journey to the West* is an excellent ancient Chinese legend, we still need to use the most advanced technologies of the era we live in to make a good game. The software tools, graphics processing technologies and the way the story is told must all suit the times."

During one meeting of the development team, Feng asked them: "We have seen many high-quality movies and played many excellent games, so can we tell this Chinese story with high standards, too, concerning the quality of its technological details, graphics, and everything? Any lack of strict quality control will disrespect this excellent Chinese story?"

Feng said this inspired the whole team.

Yang, the 42-year-old player, is one of those impressed by the game's quality. "They have done such good modeling that you can clearly see the

detailed hair of Wukong, his enemies and friends, even the non-player characters," said Yang.

Gu, the veteran games producer, said the modeling is perhaps the precise of all major video games on the market. If all the fighting scenes were joined together they would make a good action movie, he added.

Kang, who enjoys literature as well as playing games, said *Black Myth: Wukong* is a continuation of the *Journey to the West* story, meaning the development team wrote a new novel to add to the historical masterpiece. The new story follows the original seamlessly and logically, and the details are so good that "each and every one of them, even the most negligible non-player character has their own story", he said.

That's why *Black Myth: Wukong* is classified as an AAA game in the country, meaning it required "a lot of money, a lot of time, and a lot of resources" to become a masterpiece, Gu said.

On social media platforms, Chinese players have widely shared a poem to express their pride about playing the successful homegrown game:

*In various games' virtual world
you mounted in Damascus,
blade in hand
took a pirate trip in the Atlantic
won a duel in the Wild West
and acted as an assassin in Egypt.
Now, finally,
you can come back
and be a hero in your own land.*

Gao Zunrong contributed to this story.



The image of Wukong in the game, a heroic monkey with legendary power. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Kang and his friends mainly played arcade games, with the text usually in English. It was not until he studied English in middle school in the mid-1990s that he learned the stories behind the games he played.

Contra and *Super Contra* were part of a run-and-gun series featuring commandos fighting an alien invasion, while the *King of Dragons* and the *Knights of the Round* were largely based on the tales of King Arthur from British legend.

Yang Han, a 42-year-old player, said it took him 15 years to learn that *Super Mario Bros* was a story "told by a Japanese company about an Italian pipe worker's adventures in the underground tunnels of New York."

Yang got a computer in 2000 and joined the wave of fans playing the *Red Alert 2* game released the same year. Like most of the games, it was in English and involved a fictional Soviet invasion of the United States and a battle for territorial control. Yang played the game without knowing the history of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, and the Cuban missile crisis. This historical ignorance was echoed by hundreds of players of a similar age to Yang in commentary threads on social media platform Sina Weibo.

On Zhihu.com, China's equivalent to Quora, a hot question has asked why all the legendary characters in internationally popular games, from aliens coming

TOP NEWS

Hotpot customers honor hero who died after saving 3 children

By DU JUAN
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Recent crowds at a hotpot restaurant in Beijing's Haidian district have been drawn by more than the food, as people from the capital and beyond flock to the eatery for a meal as well as to pay their respects to a hero who sacrificed his life to save others.

"I just want to come to see the hero's restaurant and show my respect," said Lyu Zhaoshun, a resident of Beijing's Chaoyang district, who drove his entire family to the restaurant.

"If it were just for a meal, there would be no need to drive so far. I came here because I want my children to experience the atmosphere of honoring a hero and to learn his spirit of selflessness," said Lyu.

Luan Liuwei, a 41-year-old man from Ningyang county in Tai'an, Shandong province, ran the Beijing restaurant with his wife for many years.

On Aug 10, while visiting Gu'an county of Langfang, Hebei province, with his daughter, Luan saved three children from drowning in the Yongding River. However, when he went back into the water to rescue an adult in distress, he drowned due to exhaustion.

On Wednesday, Ningyang, which was Luan's hometown, posthumously awarded him the title of "Model of the New Era in Ningyang" and buried him in the local martyrs' cemetery.

Luan's heroic act gained widespread attention and deeply moved people in Beijing and beyond. People from all over the capital city as well as from other provinces have flocked to his restaurant to pay tribute to the hero and support the business.

"By around 5 pm, the restaurant was already full, and I waited for more than an hour without getting a seat," said a customer surnamed Wang, who had traveled from Beijing's Tongzhou district, about 50 kilometers away, according to a report in Beijing Daily.

Despite the long wait, customers showed no signs of impatience.

"People came here not just for the food, but also for Luan's story, so they don't want to leave," said one of the waiting customers.

Even some people from afar have gone to the restaurant to show their respect for the hero. A person from Heilongjiang province, after reading the news online, traveled more than eight hours by train to show support.

One restaurant employee said that "the restaurant doesn't open until 11 am, but there were already customers waiting starting at 9 am". The employee added that the previous day, the last group of customers left at 1 am.

Luan's story has also sparked widespread discussion on the internet, with many praising him as a true hero worthy of admiration from society.

Some came by just to show their respect. According to a Beijing Radio & Television Station video, one young man gave a flower basket to the restaurant and bowed outside the gate of the restaurant, saying that "China never lacks heroes, but he is the one who's by our side".

Others tried to make donations, only to have staff members chase them for several blocks to return the money. A server said that Luan's wife has declined to accept any donations.

Li Boyu contributed to this story.



Visitors throng the hotpot restaurant in Beijing's Haidian district on Saturday for a meal and to pay respects to the shop owner, a hero who sacrificed his life to save others. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Defense drill



Kim Jong-un, leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, observes a demonstration of exploding drones designed to crash into targets on Saturday at an undisclosed location in DPRK. Kim pledged to spur development of such weapons to boost his military's war readiness, the State media said on Monday. KCNA VIA AP

Shipyard transforms container vessels into floating hospitals

Complex project the first of its kind to be carried out in the country

By ZHAO LEI in Jiangyin, Jiangsu
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Engineers at a shipyard in Jiangyin, a coastal city in Jiangsu province, have been working on a project never undertaken before in this country: converting container ships into floating hospitals.

The project involving two container vessels is now nearing completion, and the converted ships are expected to be delivered to their owner, a German elderly healthcare company, in the coming autumn, said Zhou Jianxiang, general manager of CSSC Chengxi Shipyard in Jiangyin, a subsidiary of the State-owned industry conglomerate China State Shipbuilding Corp.

Each of the vessels, measuring approximately 130 meters in length and 20.6 meters in width before conversion, had a displacement of more than 8,200 metric tons and could carry up to 700 standard containers.

The conversion work on the vessels started in July 2020. However, progress was slow due to drastic and frequent changes made to the original conversion plan by the shipowner. This led to difficulties in meeting the project schedule and finalizing specific designs. Moreover, workers at the shipyard were forced to remove a great deal of apparatus that had already been installed on the ships because of the redesigning, said

engineers involved in the project.

Once ready, the floating hospitals will measure about 137.5 meters in length and 23.3 meters in width, and will have a displacement of around 12,000 metric tons, Zhou said.

Each of the converted vessels will be able to accommodate 189 medical and support personnel and cater to 211 patients. Each ship will be equipped with advanced medical equipment, including computerized tomography scanners, and 120 patient beds, he added.

In accordance with the shipowner's requirement, engineers have installed three extra decks and a helicopter landing platform. A number of equipment such as power

generators, fresh water generators, kitchen hardware and laundry facilities have also been fitted.

Zhou noted that this is the first time that any Chinese shipyard has carried out the task of converting container ships into floating hospitals.

The manager said that hospital ships are of great help in the event of epidemics because they can be rapidly deployed to coastal regions and can ensure effective isolation to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Established in 1973, CSSC Chengxi Shipyard is well known for its expertise in repairing and converting ships. It is also one of the nation's major builders of commercial ships such as freighters and oil tankers.

Ties: Nations' approach to resolving disputes praised

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However, what sets this relationship apart is the manner in which these disputes have been managed. Leaders of both nations have opted for strategic diplomacy over confrontation, maintaining a continuous dialogue to prevent these issues from overshadowing their broader partnership.

Vietnam's "Four Nos" policy — no military alliances, no foreign military bases on its soil, no alignment with one country against another, and no use of force in international relations — has been central to this diplomatic balancing act. This policy has not only reinforced Vietnam's sovereignty and independence but has been cited by Roland Simbulan, the vice-chairman of the Center for People Empowerment in Governance, a public policy center in the Philippines, as a model of non-alignment that could be emulated by other Southeast Asian nations.

By keeping the South China Sea issue within the realm of bilateral negotiations, China and Vietnam have demonstrated a commitment to regional peace and stability. This approach has allowed both nations to focus on their shared interests and continue building on a strong partnership, offering a blueprint for other countries that are dealing with territorial or other disputes.

The two nations' relationship will undoubtedly play a crucial role in promoting regional stability and economic development, offering a powerful example of the benefits of cooperation, pragmatic diplomacy and mutual respect.

With both nations already working to implement the outcomes of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Vietnam last year, Lam's visit to China focused on deepening the strategic partnership and a China-Vietnam community of shared future. High-level dialogues covered a wide range of issues, from expanding economic cooperation to enhancing connectivity and even addressing maritime disputes.

This visit is not just a diplomatic formality; it is a strategic move that reflects the importance both nations place on their bilateral relationship. By choosing China as his first overseas destination after

becoming CPV general secretary, Lam is reaffirming the important role that China plays in Vietnam's foreign policy. This choice underscores the enduring friendship between the two nations and the strategic importance of their partnership in navigating the complexities of regional and global politics.

As the Asia-Pacific faces continuing socioeconomic and geopolitical uncertainties pushed by outside forces, the robust China-Vietnam partnership stands as a pillar of regional stability. The deepening ties between these two nations, marked by high-level visionary leadership and strategic diplomacy, offer an exemplary model of how countries can collaborate to achieve mutual benefits while managing differences.

The China-Vietnam relationship is more than just a bilateral partnership; it carries the potential to contribute to the future of Asia. As both nations continue to deepen their cooperation, their relationship will undoubtedly play a crucial role in promoting regional stability and economic development, offering a powerful example of the benefits of cooperation, pragmatic diplomacy and mutual respect, and serving as a cornerstone of peace, stability and prosperity in Asia.

The author is a multi-awarded columnist of Philippine Star, Abante and Bilyonaryo; economics and politics analyst; moderator of Pandesa! Forum and TV host of "Industry Beacon". The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Xizang: More people involved in aid program

From page 1

Under the policy of pairing-up assistance for the region, 17 provinces and cities as well as 78 central State organs and 27 centrally administered State-owned enterprises are designated to assist in specific areas of Xizang, injecting strong impetus into the development of the plateau region.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, an unprecedented amount of funds and personnel have been earmarked for the pairing-up assistance work, covering an unprecedentedly wide range of areas.

In addition, the program has been further improved to focus on solving the most pressing difficulties and problems that are of great concern to the people. As a result, the updated pairing-up assistance model for healthcare was introduced in 2015, and that for education in 2016.

In addition, to aid Xizang's rural vitalization drive, 80 percent of the pairing-up assistance funding is required to be used to improve people's livelihoods and support the development of rural areas, so that more benefits can be directly delivered to a wider range of people on a long-term basis.

At the seventh Central Symposium on Xizang Work, which was held in Beijing in August 2020, President Xi Jinping stressed a long-term commitment to the CPC Central Committee's policy to ensure that

Xizang has support from the central authorities and assistance from the whole country. Achieving sustained stability and rapid development in Xizang constitutes a major contribution to the overall work of the Party and State, he added.

During his visit to Xizang in July 2021, Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said that the spirit of assisting Xizang is highly valued by the CPC and represents a significant advantage of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

During the trip, when meeting personnel who came to assist the region's development in different sectors, Xi said that these efforts to aid Xizang must be carried on from one group of talented personnel to another, and from one generation to another.

While skills and strength have been pooled to support the region's development, such experiences have also put people's competence to the test, he said, adding that the experience of providing assistance to Xizang should be cherished.

Almost 12,000 personnel in 10 groups have been sent to Xizang since the pairing-up assistance program was initiated 30 years ago, said Song Liqiang, deputy head of the organization department of the regional Party committee.

Over the past three decades, the number of personnel selected to assist Xizang's development has

increased steadily, from 622 in the first group to 2,117 in the 10th group, Song said during a news conference on Thursday.

The composition of these groups, consisting of professionals, technicians, government officials and enterprise managers, has been increasingly optimized over the years in terms of gender, educational background, age and professional structure, Song added.

"Their involvement has boosted the high-quality development of Xizang and enhanced exchanges and communication among people from all ethnic groups. They have also played a key role in mentoring local officials and personnel in different sectors," Song said.

Meanwhile, nearly 2,000 medical experts from 184 hospitals nationwide have assisted the development of healthcare services in Xizang since August 2015, the regional health commission said last week.

"They have made an obvious and huge difference by helping the region to improve its standard of healthcare, which has benefited everyone in Xizang," said Nyima from the People's Hospital of Lhasa.

Currently, the maternal mortality rate in the region is 38.63 per 100,000 people, the infant mortality rate is 5.37 per 1,000, the hospital delivery rate is 99.15 percent, and the average life expectancy is 72.19 years. All of these indicators are at the best levels in Xizang's history, Song said.

CHINA

Editor's Note: Improved infrastructure, policy support and funding in areas with large populations of different ethnic groups have transformed people's lives. China Daily presents a series of stories about how China is determined to leave no ethnic group behind in the country's development, while inspiring them to embark on a new journey and make achievements in the new era. This article is the second installment, focusing on traditional Kazak lifestyle.

Young people take reins of Kazak culture with pride

Traditional herders put their love of horses above all else in Xinjiang's Zhaosu county



A Kazak herder drives his cattle at their summer pasture in Zhaosu, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in July. ZHANG XIAO / CHINA DAILY

By CUI JIA in Zhaosu, Xinjiang
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When Yeran Nurborat rides his horse Smoky back to his family's summer pasture on a stretch of grassland at the foot of a snowcapped mountain in Zhaosu county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, all his troubles go away, he said.

The pasture is only accessible by horse or motorcycle via a steep, narrow path, allowing the 20-year-old herder of the Kazak ethnic group to retain a little oasis preserving his traditional roots.

Those who make the three-hour journey will pass herds of horses wandering freely on the slopes of the mountains and through forests of tall pine trees.

At the end of the uphill journey, the view opens up to reveal a vast green pasture spattered with yellow flowers and snowcapped mountains behind.

When the Yili horses — a special breed of horse found in Xinjiang — raised by Yeran's family gallop the pasture it looks as if they are running on the clouds. It's no wonder why horses in Zhaosu, Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture, are affectionately dubbed "heavenly horses".

"This place may seem like a wonderland to outsiders, but it's just our home, which we cherish," Yeran said while sipping a cup of traditional Kazak milk tea at the wooden house where his family stays during the summer.

Like Yeran, many young people from the Kazak ethnic group in Zhaosu are determined to retain the unbreakable bond they have connecting humans, nature and culture. In recent years, as tourism picks up and the power of social media takes off, these young people want others to learn about herders and what they have learned with each generation.

Zhaosu lies on the western flank of Xinjiang, within the verdant valleys of the Ili River. Its picture-perfect alpine pastures nestle amid the grand Tianshan mountain range. Differing from Kazak herdsmen in other parts of Xinjiang who use horses to herd sheep, Zhaosu people are known for breeding Yili horses.

With top-quality grassland and the people's passion and love for horses, the county is often referred to as "horse heaven" by people in the know. As of the end of last year, Zhaosu had almost as many horses as it had people — 177,000 residents to 121,500 steeds.

"The Kazaks have an old saying that 'horses are the wings of man'. We see them as our family members so it's our duty to take care of them," Yeran said while watching two-year-old Smoky frolic on the grassland. His family owns more than 40 horses.

Yeran said because raising horses is his passion, he's decided to carry on the family tradition, which the modern world still has a place for. The family can receive an annual income of about 100,000 yuan (\$14,000) for selling horses used for racing.

He said he doesn't envy the life in cities, as spending time around nature allows people to stay healthy both physically and mentally. "I ride my horse when I feel happy. Also, whenever I feel down, I take my horse for a



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ride toward the mountain at full speed. My spirit is instantly lifted."

People in Zhaosu respect nature and know how to keep a balance between raising horses and protecting the environment. They live on the pasture high up in the mountains during the summer with their livestock, and move down to their settlements in lower areas in the winter.

The recently popular TV series *To The Wonder*, based on the adaptation of the novel *My Altay* by author Li Juan has put the spotlight on the nomadic life of the Kazaks in Altay prefecture in Xinjiang.

Central to the series is its portrayal of the clash between tradition and modernity among the local people, a theme that also resonates deeply in other parts of the world.

"The clashes do exist in real life, but we won't lose our traditions no matter what because they are in our blood just like we are born horse riders," said Yeran, who plays the dombra, a Kazak traditional musical instrument in his free time.

The TV series has caught the imaginations of young Chinese yearning to escape the grind of life in the country's major cities, and triggered a spike in tourism to pastures in Xinjiang, including Zhaosu. Young Kazaks like Yeran want to capitalize on this opportunity.



Above, from left: The mother of Yeran Nurborat boils Kazak-style milk tea for guests at their house in Zhaosu, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in July. Yeran plays the dombra, a Kazak traditional musical instrument.

Bottom: A summer grazing ground for livestock in Zhaosu. PHOTOS BY ZHANG XIAO / CHINA DAILY

"I want to open up a homestay on our summer pasture so people can experience the life of a Kazak nomad and learn about the Kazak culture, as well as visit tourist spots where they can only enjoy the beautiful scenery," he said. "I hope I can offer them experiences of a different way of living."

In Zhaosu, every boy from the Kazak ethnic group receives a horse as a gift when they reach the age of four or five. They are taught how to ride horses before they can walk, said Galin Nurbarhat who started horse racing when he was a boy.

The 24-year-old is currently studying at a university in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang. He always wants to get home as soon as possible during vacations so he can be with the horses.

"No matter what my profession will be in the future, my love for horses will never change. Horses are loved and respected in Zhaosu as they are also seen as residents of the county," said Galin, who helps out at his uncle's horse farm.

One of his uncle's horses took part in a race at the equestrian events of the 12th National Traditional Games of Ethnic Minorities of China held at the Tianma Tourism and Cultural Park in Zhaosu from July 8 to 13.

Participants from various ethnic groups showcased their horse-riding skills at events including horse racing, horseback archery and *hada* snatching, drawing waves of amazement from the crowd at the venue and online.

The ethnic games also include exhibition events such as *diaoyang*, or snatching the sheep, a traditional sport of the Kazak ethnic group. During the competition, which is similar to buzkashi in Central Asia, two teams of riders try to grab a headless sheep. They either tuck it under their saddle or carry it on their horses, while other participants chase and attempt to snatch the sheep from them. Through repeated struggles, the team that finally places the sheep at the designated location is declared the winner.

"We take the game of *diaoyang* very seri-

ously and have a special saddle for it. The sheep is normally offered by people who have something to celebrate, such as a wedding, especially in the winter. You need to be strong and an exceptional rider to take part, so it always feels great to become a winner," said Galin, who's won such events multiple times.

While young people are keeping Zhaosu's rich equestrian heritage alive, a boom in the county's modern equine industry has brought local young people more career opportunities.

The county's summer horse drive, which involves a grand spectacle of thousands of steeds setting off from the Tianma tourism and cultural park to gallop across Zhaosu's flower-filled steppe, has become a major calling card, topping viewing lists on social media platforms nationwide.

Lashan Yibasar, 18, is an equestrian performer at the park, which also offers visitors equestrian shows put together by locals. Besides taking part in daily performances, Lashan has been training hard to improve her skills in equestrian vaulting, which is described as gymnastics on horseback.

The only downside of her job is that she cannot see her own horse Black Eye, which is kept at her home, she said. "When I video call my parents, I often ask them to take the phone to the stable so I can see Black Eye and talk to him for a bit because I miss him a lot," she said.

"I do my job with joy, enthusiasm and happiness because I can be around horses all the time," Lashan said. "More importantly, I want the world to see that people from the Kazak ethnic group in Zhaosu are the best horse riders. It's also a good way to promote the traditional Kazak culture, which the young people are all very proud of."

In the first half of this year, Zhaosu received 2.98 million visits from domestic tourists, generating a revenue of some 1.12 billion yuan, an increase of more than 22.3 percent year-on-year.



Former city slickers share new life on the pasture

By CUI JIA

Zhou Menghao and Yan Simin recently shared their experience of living like true herders from the Kazak ethnic group on the pastures of Zhaosu county in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in a video they posted on social media platforms.

Over the past eight months, the young couple from Shanghai endured the hardship of moving to two different pastures with the herdsmen and their livestock. "In the past, we were outsiders who traveled back and forth between the city and grassland, but by getting deeply involved in the Kazak herders' lifestyle this year, we feel that we've finally become part of the local community," they said in the video.

About three years ago, the couple rented a house on a herder's winter settlement and moved to Zhaosu. They had the house renovated and purchased a horse and a sheep. They then began to share their life on the pasture on their social media account "Caotuihe" in July last year.



Zhou Menghao (right) and Yan Simin and their livestock in Zhaosu, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Their first post was a video of a stunning sunset on the grassland at their doorstep. Their posts quickly became popular, especially among young people who feel trapped in the cities.

Zhou, 28, said that they are both freelancers in the advertising industry so were relatively free to choose where they wanted to live and their lifestyle. They made the decision to move to Zhaosu after being attracted by the scenes of herders grazing their horses and sheep in the stunning landscape while on a business trip.

"The qualities of herders are honesty, simplicity and being chilled, which are very inspiring," said Zhou, who has made many local friends. "Also, they are always optimistic about life and rarely complain."

He said he and Yan, 26, enjoy noticing things that they would normally never pay close attention to in the city such as blossoming flowers and the ever-changing weather. "Cities are man-made and artificial, but here things are created by nature. It's so different and magical."

Despite many people commenting on their videos saying it looks like their dream life, living on the pasture has its challenges. The couple has to take care of livestock and maintain the grassland. More importantly, they have to learn to make peace with nature and follow its rules, Zhou said.

He said the price they have paid to move to Zhaosu, such as missing out on potential job opportunities and income, is nothing compared to their gains. "Life on the pasture is so interesting and beyond most people's imagination. It's like we've been given a new life. I hope people can be brave when pursuing the things that make their hearts skip a beat."



CHINA



Well-paved roads run through terraced paddy fields at Bayi village in Henghe Tujia township of Chongqing, providing easy access to farming machinery. PHOTOS BY RAN MENGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mechanized farming boosts productivity in remote village

Vast fields of Bayi become high-yield, thanks to hi-tech farming machinery

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

Remote Bayi village, nestled among cliffs in Henghe Tujia township, Chongqing, was busier than usual with farming activity.

The reason for the increased productivity was that its farming equipment has been recently mechanized and a bumper harvest is expected this autumn as a result.

Mechanized farming in China is no longer a novelty, but for "cliff villages" like Bayi that were once plagued by low productivity and difficult transportation, the development of mechanized operations holds exceptional value and significance.

Chongqing's northeastern township of Henghe, situated at the southern base of the Qiyue mountain range, is characterized by hills and numerous gullies.

And Bayi, on the northern border of Henghe near Hubei province, has an average altitude of over 1,000 meters. It consists of 652 households with a population of 1,949 people, of which 45 households and their farmland are situated on cliffs.

To enhance agricultural production, Bayi began to transform the once small, irregular and low-yield "chicken coop land" into high-yield, eco-friendly high-standard farmland suitable for large mechanical farming.

"The most challenging task is to break the villagers' ingrained notions about land boundaries, because for farmers, especially those seniors who have experienced food shortages, land is their lifeblood," said He Zhongkun, an official of Bayi village.

He and his colleagues negotiated with hundreds of households door-to-door and gathered feedback for months. So far, about 180



A harvester is used to harvest rice in the village.

hectares of farmland have been paved, linked and made capable of handling high-tech and intelligent agricultural machinery such as harvesters, plowing machines and fertilization drones.

"The efficiency of cultivation has been boosted by 80 to 90 percent, and the per capita disposable income of the villagers is more than twice what it was," He said.

Through dividend sharing, land transfer and employment, local farmers are able to share the dividends brought by the development of the industry.

An oilseed-and-rice crop rotation method has been applied to expand the harvest. In April, 40 hectares of oilseed rape yielded a bumper harvest. Currently, 133 hectares of rice paddies are thriving and growing to their fullest potential.

High-altitude rice is highly sought-after in the market thanks to its rich nutrition and good taste, and various high-quality rice vari-

eties have been demonstrated and planted, yielding about 7.5 metric tons per hectare, He said.

In April, apart from traditional cultivation of rice and oilseed rape, the locals also developed trial cultivation of 6.7 hectares of drought-resistant Chinese golden sunflowers.

This rare plant, with its flowers, fruits, roots, stems and leaves all possessing medicinal and edible value, is known for its economic value.

Since July, the flower has been yielding about 150 kilograms per hectare. Processed products such as flower tea and seed oil have been developed to boost farmers' incomes.

While mechanized operations have mostly replaced traditional manual labor, the local government is also encouraging farmers to work part-time at local companies transplanting seedlings, and weeding and sowing as needed, particularly during the busy farm-

ing season from March to May.

"I never expected to earn money by picking flowers," said 59-year-old local farmer Tan Kuixin.

Despite having a congenital limb disability, he can tend to golden sunflowers and earn extra money.

"In the past, it was difficult for us to navigate through our land, as it had been abandoned and overgrown with weeds and trees," said 62-year-old farmer Fang Shaoqing. "Now great changes have taken place in both the land's appearance and economic value."

Five years ago, Fang, who had been working in Shanghai for years, decided to return home.

He now serves as management staff at China Co-op Group Company's business in Bayi, mainly responsible for organizing and coordinating labor on local farmland, and can earn about 30,000 yuan (\$4,200) a year.

Due to its picturesque surroundings and cool climate, the village has also flourished as an agritourism destination. Notably, the village, with almost half the population being Tujia ethnic people, has traditional ethnic minority elements. The opportunity to experience and learn about agricultural activities, including planting seedlings, harvesting rice and drying grains, has attracted many visitors.

In addition to every household having access to a paved road, the village also renovated a steep 2.6-kilometer road last year, making it easier for grain cargo trucks to zigzag along.

The road was hailed as the "Road to Happiness" by local people due to its significance in facilitating transportation and improving their well-being.

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Agriculture drone comes to the rescue of farmers in Jilin

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

In Gudianzi township of Jilin city, Jilin province, Zheng Qiyuan's drone team has been quite busy during the recent crop planting season.

Wearing a straw hat, the 20-year-old junior at Jilin Mechanical Industry School occasionally looked up to observe the farmland's terrain while inputting operational parameters for the drone into his phone. The agricultural drone then took off and flew toward a vast cornfield to spread fertilizer.

The operation on 0.4 hectares of land took only 3 minutes, earning praise from his customer, Liu Guosheng.

"Without the help of the drone, my wife and I would have had to labor in the fields for over two days," he said.

"The drone helped save time and effort, and the fertilizer application is more precise."

With 2 years of experience at Jilin Qihang UAV Co, Zheng has become a key pilot for the company. "To be a qualified agricultural drone pilot, one must be familiar with the aircraft's performance and operation, as well as be able to plan flight routes, payload amounts and charging times," he said.

"Over the past 2 years, I have progressed rapidly due to lots of practice and study."

Founded in 2021, the company now has seven employees, mainly composed of graduates from Jilin Machinery Industry School, with an average age of less than 30.

"Our company is mainly engaged in sales of Jifei agricultural UAV, after-sales maintenance, UAV plant protection services, farmland surveying and mapping," said Ma Chao, founder of the company. "Our professional agricultural drone team has achieved annual operations over 6,667 hectares with 500 metric tons of fertilizer."

The farmers gradually accepted drone technology as they witnessed its effectiveness, added Ma, who is also a teacher at Jilin Mechanical Industry School. Initially, he said, farmers were hesitant to adopt the new technology.

"When drones were first used for pesticide spraying, each drone carried 20 kilograms, which could cover 1 hectare of farmland and led to skepticism

among farmers who were accustomed to manually carrying 30-kilogram sprayers that could cover one-fifteenth of a hectare," he said.

"However, through promotional efforts and collaboration with agricultural suppliers, our company managed to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of drone-based spraying, gaining farmers' trust and increasing demand for their services."

Last year, the company extended its business to sell agricultural drones to nearby farmers.

In recent months, the company has sold over 30 drones.

At present, he said, agricultural drones are priced around 40,000 to 50,000 yuan (\$5,600 to \$7,000) which is within reach of most households, especially with government subsidies available.

Jilin is a major grain-producing province in China. Last year, the province's grain output exceeded 40 million tons for three consecutive years, ranking fourth nationwide. The average yield reached 7.18 tons per hectare, top among major grain-producing regions in the country.

The robust agricultural foundation has spurred the development of related industries.

Chen Weiliang, 28, is a core member of the drone team, serving as a pilot and maintenance technician.

"Drones are evolving rapidly, especially with the proliferation of AI and smart technologies, leading to increasingly sophisticated features," said Chen. "Therefore, it requires continuous learning and self-improvement. I firmly believe in the bright future of drone technology as it gradually becomes more market-oriented, akin to traditional agriculture."

Since last year, the members of the team have provided training courses for over 200 local farmers, with several becoming professional pilots and starting businesses in nearby towns.

"There is a great demand for drone professionals, so we need more pilots and more equipment," Ma said.

"The concept of the low-altitude economy is gaining traction, attracting many young people interested in pursuing a career in drone technology."

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Zheng Qiyuan operates an agriculture drone in Gudianzi township of Jilin city, Jilin province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

GUIYANG — Jiao Hongxiu, a Miao ethnic woman, recently won an international art and design award for her work.

"Creating pieces rooted in our ethnic culture that can also foster 'dialogue' with the world gives me greater confidence in preserving and developing intangible cultural heritage," Jiao expressed with pride when discussing her achievement.

At the third FA International Frontier Innovative Art and Design Competition (China Division), Jiao submitted two fashion illustrations inspired by Miao embroidery. Her works stood out among over 13,000 entries, earning her the gold and bronze awards in the professional category.

The gold-winning piece, titled *Journey of Splendor*, creatively reinterprets traditional Miao embroi-

Ethnic woman takes Miao embroidery to new level

dery patterns of people, flowers and birds into geometric forms.

By integrating modern design aesthetics, Jiao fused Miao embroidery culture with contemporary elements, vividly portraying the current vibrant life of the Miao people.

"Although the entire work incorporates modern design concepts, the color schemes and pattern designs are all inspired by Miao embroidery, which is the soul of the piece," she said.

Guizhou province in the southwestern heartland of China is home to abundant ethnic cultural resources. Miao embroidery has been recognized as part of China's first

batch of national intangible cultural heritage.

Jiao, 39, grew up in Luomian village, Lushan township of Kaili city, Guizhou province. Watching her mother dye fabrics, embroider and sew clothes from a young age, she developed a deep interest in Miao embroidery and other intangible cultural heritage.

With a bachelor's degree in art design, Jiao has always maintained a passion for ethnic culture. She has been tirelessly seeking larger platforms to promote Miao embroidery and other intangible cultural heritages, aiming to preserve these traditional handicrafts.

Over the past decade, Jiao has

dedicated herself to the cultural heritage preservation and development cause by furthering her professional training at university, visiting multiple ethnic villages to consult with heritage inheritors, running a cultural and creative store and eventually establishing her own company.

"The public's love for ethnic handicrafts reveals a vast market for these traditional crafts. However, the gap in generational succession among Miao embroidery inheritors also highlights the challenging task of preserving and passing down this ethnic culture," she said.

In 2018, Jiao established a cultural and creative company focused on

cultivating talent in traditional ethnic handicrafts and developing related products for sale.

Each year, Jiao hosts numerous study tours and research teams, and she has been invited to conduct training sessions in various regions. To date, she has trained over 700 individuals.

"In addition to teaching everyone how to master embroidery and other skills, I hope to bring new design and creative concepts. While preserving Miao embroidery, we can also better embrace fashion," Jiao added.

In her studio, she not only displays high-end custom ethnic garments but also a variety of daily

items incorporating intangible cultural elements such as embroidery and batik. "Miao embroidery is highly versatile; it can serve as a classic decoration for ethnic clothing or as a fashionable touch for everyday items like cushions, bags, shoes and hats," Jiao said.

Liu Rui, head of the Silver Embroidery Office in Kaili city, said: "The preservation of intangible cultural heritages like Miao embroidery requires not only maintaining their original essence but also integrating them with contemporary aesthetics."

"By combining traditional craftsmanship with digital and intelligent production lines, we can better integrate these arts into daily life and fashion trends."

XINHUA

WORLDUS

San Diego Zoo CEO has had 'incredible' experiences in China

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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Whether it's welcoming pandas back to San Diego or exploring the wilds of China for a Disney documentary, Paul Baribault has had good experiences working with the country.

The most recent example was when Panda Ridge, home to giant pandas Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, officially opened at the San Diego Zoo on Aug 8, in a much-anticipated return of the beloved giant pandas to the city after a five-year absence. It also marked the first arrival of pandas in the US in two decades.

The milestone reflects the collaborative efforts between China and the United States, with Baribault, president and CEO of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, or SDZWA, playing a pivotal role in the successful launch.

In an interview with China Daily during the opening ceremony, Baribault highlighted the zoo's 30-year partnership with the China Wildlife Conservation Association, or CWCA, and the dual commitment to



Paul Baribault, president and CEO of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. **RENA LI / CHINA DAILY**

collaboration over the next decade.

"We are very proud of our relationship with CWCA. They have been incredible partners for the past 30 years and we eagerly anticipate what we will accomplish together in the next 10 years and beyond," Baribault said.

"My first experience working in China was in 2012, when I was with DisneyNature. I worked on the nature film *Born in China*, where we had the opportunity to showcase the beauty of China and work with the China Wildlife Conservation Association during that time," Baribault recalled.

Bringing the pandas back to San Diego was a challenge. It required hard work, meticulous planning and a healthy dose of optimism. Baribault led a dedicated task force from the SDZWA, assembling a team focused on identifying every potential obstacle.

Together, they worked tirelessly to turn obstacles into opportunities, ultimately reaching their goal after a six-month sprint.

Baribault, who has a bachelor's degree from Stanford University and an MBA from the University of Southern California, has a distinguished history as a leader in wildlife healthcare, conservation, science and education.

His leadership since becoming SDZWA CEO in 2019 helped facilitate the return of the pandas and strengthened the zoo's ties with China.

"Giant pandas are emblematic of the collaborative efforts between China and the US in conservation. I hope this marks the beginning of a new era of continued global col-

laboration for the protection of ecosystems," Baribault said.

He emphasized the unifying power of giant pandas in fostering collaboration.

"We are dedicated to saving wildlife worldwide by working with our Chinese partners, combining their skills with our expertise in wildlife care and conservation science," Baribault said.

Before joining the SDZWA, Baribault had a significant impact on nature conservation through his work in the film industry, joining The Walt Disney Studios in 1997. He served as vice-president of animation marketing operations and strategy and general manager of the DisneyNature film label, committed to continuing Walt Disney's legacy of conservation and fostering a deeper understanding of the natural world.

Nature films

Walt Disney's series True-Life Adventures began as an experiment with the documentary *Seal Island* (1948). The series went on to win eight Academy Awards, inspiring generations of nature filmmakers and conservationists.

Under Baribault's stewardship, DisneyNature films — *Earth* (2009), *Oceans* (2010), *African Cats* (2011), *Chimpanzee* (2012), *Bears* (2014), *Monkey Kingdom* (2015), and *Born in China* (2016) — produced seven of the top eight highest-grossing feature-length nature films in industry history.

Born in China, a coproduction by DisneyNature and Shanghai Media Group, took audiences on an epic journey into the wilds of China, exploring places where few have ventured.

The film follows the stories of three animal families — giant pandas, golden monkeys and snow leopards — transporting viewers to some of the most extreme environments in China — from frigid mountains to the heart of bamboo forests — capturing some of the most intimate moments seen in a nature film.

Based on the opening-week attendance in the US in April 2017, the film made a significant contribution to the World Wildlife Fund's efforts to protect wild pandas and snow leopards.

"Our filmmakers spent nearly three years battling tough terrain, freezing temperatures and the near-impossible task of finding snow leopards. China and its captivating wildlife left an incredible impression on all of us," said Baribault.

"When I joined the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance in 2019, I made an early trip to China to underscore the importance of continuing our conservation projects together," he said.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the partnership between the CWCA and SDZWA.

Si Ping, deputy secretary-general of the CWCA, who attended the opening ceremony for Panda Ridge in San Diego, stressed building an international exchange and cooperation platform that can support the conservation of the wild giant panda population in China and contribute to global biodiversity.

"One of the main priorities of this conservation project was not just to focus on breeding in our managed care facilities, both here and in China, but also to support access to the species in the wild and to help repopulate their natural habitats in China," she added.

Zheng advances at US Open

China's Olympic gold medalist overcomes loss in first set to beat US' Amanda Anisimova

By **HENG WEILI** in New York
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Zheng Qinwen didn't let a shaky start deter her in the US Open on Monday, as she relied on her serve to bounce back and win her first-round match.

Zheng, China's Olympic women's tennis gold medalist, overcame early troubles with her serve to advance in New York with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Amanda Anisimova of the United States on Monday.

A US Open quarterfinalist last year, Zheng won 73 percent of her first-serve points and six of her 11 break-point chances during a two-hour, 20-minute match at Louis Armstrong Stadium in Queens.

Zheng, 21, who is seeded seventh in the top US tournament, persevered although she was broken on her serve four times by the American.

"She was hitting the ball really good today, everything was going to the side and in at the beginning. I couldn't do anything," Zheng said of her opponent in comments after the match.

"The further the match goes, I started to find my rhythm on the hard court. In the second set, I really believed in my shots," Zheng said. "I started to be more consistent and found more percentage in my serve. Little by little, I got into it, I want to say a really good job from Amanda."

In the first set, Anisimova, 22, took a 5-1 double-break lead but then had to dig deep when Zheng broke her serve at love, turned aside three set points on her next serve, and then broke her opponent's serve again.

But Anisimova, having twice failed to serve out the set, finally managed to capture the first set.

In the second set, Zheng looked more comfortable from the line, including during a four-ace game to reach a 2-2 score before she broke serve in the next game to put Anisimova on the back foot. Zheng then leaned on her serve to close out the frame.

Zheng jumped out to a double-break, 3-0 lead in the deciding set.



Above: China's Zheng Qinwen celebrates after winning her first-round match against Amanda Anisimova of the United States at the US Open Tennis Championships in New York City on Monday. **EDUARDO MUNOZ / REUTERS**

Right: Zheng returns a shot to Anisimova during their match at Louis Armstrong Stadium in Queens, New York. **KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH / AP**

Anisimova had to have her left foot tended to before the set. At one point, Anisimova winced after a shot due to discomfort in her right hand.

Zheng was able to stay on an even keel in the match.

"It's the typical match I will lose [before], especially after huge success, because as I know myself, usually after huge success, I will get a little bit too high and until the reality slap me down again," Zheng said.

"I say, everything starts zero. You are not anymore Olympic champion. Just be humble and trying to work, fight every single match, because if you don't fight, you have a big chance you lose.

"I'm going to continue working



hard, keep the stable mindset," she said.

"To win this match means I make one step forward in my mental side."

Zheng was the first Asian player, female or male, to win an Olympic tennis gold medal in singles earlier this month at the Paris Games.

She will face Russia's Erika Andreeva in the next round.

Zheng was born in Shiyuan, in Central China's Hubei province, and holds a B.S. degree from the

Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan.

Zheng and Li Na are the only tennis players from China to be ranked in the top 10. Li won the 2011 French Open and the Australian Open in 2014, retiring that year.

"I want to stay playing the US Open," Zheng said. "I'm happy what I did in the past, but right now, I just want to focus on here."

Agencies contributed to this story.

Jobs data spurs political response, focus on Fed

By **HENG WEILI** in New York

The recent massive downward revision of jobs created in the United States in a one-year period prompted political reaction and also raised questions on whether the Federal Reserve has waited too long to cut interest rates.

The US government reported on Aug 21 that the economy created 818,000 fewer jobs from April 2023 through March 2024. It was the largest revision to federal jobs data in 15 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The revision represented a total downward change of about 0.5 percent, meaning that monthly job gains during the period averaged roughly 174,000, compared with the previously reported figure of 242,000.

If the number remains in place through a final revision in February, it would be the largest downward revision since the 902,000 downgrade to employment in March 2009.

"What you're seeing is an echo of the large (pandemic-era) shocks that we're just working our way through," said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM, The Washington Post reported. "We're trying to ascertain the size of the labor force and its flows."

The Biden administration has maintained that the job market is still robust in the United States, with unemployment from April 2023 through March 2024 averaging under 4 percent.

"This preliminary estimate doesn't change the fact that the jobs recovery has been and remains historically strong, delivering solid job and wage gains, strong consumer spending, and record small business creation," Jared Bernstein, chair of the White House's Council



This doesn't challenge the idea we're still in an expansion, but it does signal we should expect monthly job growth to be more muted and put extra pressure on the Fed to cut rates."

Robert Frick, economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union

of Economic Advisers, said in a statement.

Biden has often mentioned jobs creation in his public comments and did so again in his speech on Aug 19 at the Democratic National Convention. He said that he had helped create "a record 16 million new jobs".

Former US president Donald Trump, however, the 2024 Republican presidential candidate, seized on the revised BLS number at a campaign rally in North Carolina on Aug 21.

He accused his Democratic opponent in the November election, Vice-President Kamala Harris, and Biden of "fraudulently manipulating job statistics to hide the true extent of the economic ruin that they've inflicted on America".

"They said they existed and they never did exist," Trump said. "They built them up so that they could say what a wonderful job they're doing." Trump also unleashed repeated criticism of the revision that day on his Truth Social

platform.

Jodey Arrington, a Texas Republican and the chair of the GOP-controlled House Budget Committee, said in an Aug 21 statement: "The economy is the top issue in this presidential race and the recent downwardly revised job numbers taken together with persistently high prices and interest rates (bellies) a much weaker Biden-Harris economy than we were led to believe."

"The tax, spend, and regulate economic agenda of Biden-Harris has failed and no one knows that better than working Americans."

The revision also could change the Fed's rate-cutting timetable.

"This is a noticeably larger than ... normal revision ... it wouldn't be a stretch for the Fed to assume that recent job growth is also being overstated, strengthening its decision to shift attention from inflation toward the labor market," said Ryan Sweet, chief US economist at Oxford Economics, Reuters reported.

"This doesn't challenge the idea we're still in an expansion, but it does signal we should expect monthly job growth to be more muted and put extra pressure on the Fed to cut rates," said Robert Frick, economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union, to The Associated Press.

Fed policymakers could consider a weaker job market as they mull future rate reductions after the initial cuts expected at their Sept 17-18 meeting.

In July, payrolls were weaker than expected, eliciting talk that the Fed may have waited too long to begin cutting rates, as the unemployment rate rose to a post-pandemic high of 4.3 percent.

The central bank has kept its benchmark overnight interest rate

in the 5.25-5.50 percent range for more than a year, having raised it by 525 basis points in 2022 and 2023 to tackle high inflation.

The jobs-creation revision also generated responses on social media.

"This more than any other data has given the illusion of a strong economy this year, in stark contrast with other jobs data — e.g. household employment," posted economist Albert Edwards on X.

Journalist John Carney wrote on X, "Contrary to what you might have heard from GOP officials, the revision to jobs numbers wasn't evidence of the BLS cooking the books." But he speculated that there was "a huge number of jobs created during the Biden administration" that went to people in the United States illegally.

Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter, defended the BLS in a series of posts on X on Aug 21.

"Is the Bureau of Labor Statistics a massive pro-Biden Administration shill? And are today's revisions to labor statistics evidence of (a) huge conspiracy to inflate the economic data? The answer is a declarative NO."

She also wrote that she has "consistently been surprised and impressed by (BLS) professionalism, non-partisanship, and transparency. It is a pretty unique gem that accomplishes a great deal with modest funding, and helps us all make better-informed decisions."

Pollak qualified her praise by saying she is someone who is "deeply skeptical of government, is shocked at how rampant corruption is in the US, and is by no means naive about the political leanings of most DC residents or govt employees".

Agencies contributed to this story.

A break from the heat wave



Children run through the Whirlpool Compass Fountain as the sun sets during a heat wave Monday in St. Joseph, Michigan. **DON CAMPBELL / THE HERALD-PALLADIUM VIA AP**

WORLD

Macron holds talks on naming new PM

Pressure mounts on president seven weeks into parliamentary deadlock

By MOHAMMAD ARIF ULLAH
in Paris
For China Daily

Seven weeks after a surprise snap election, French President Emmanuel Macron has begun consultations at the Elysee Palace to resolve the ensuing political crisis and to appoint a new prime minister.

In the July elections, no party won an outright majority in the National Assembly, resulting in a hung parliament. Outgoing Prime Minister Gabriel Attal has been leading a caretaker government that managed the country through the Paris Olympics.

The next prime minister will face significant challenges, including securing parliamentary approval for the 2025 budget, especially as France faces pressure from the European Commission and bond markets to reduce its deficit.

Opposition figures have strongly criticized Macron for the delay, with some describing his approach as "a denial of democracy".

After extensive discussions, the left-wing New Popular Front, or NFP, the largest group after the election — announced they want 37-year-old economist Lucie Castets as the new prime minister.

The meeting between Macron and the NFP on Friday morning lasted about an hour and a half, French media reported. On arrival at the Elysee Palace, Castets stressed the importance of respecting the election results and pro-

posed a solution based on stability.

After the meeting, Olivier Faure, the leader of the Socialist Party and part of the left alliance, said Macron had not provided a "specific date" for appointing a government but assured that it would happen soon.

He also said there would be no division within the NFP. It is up to the leading coalition to form a government and find compromises.

Later on Friday, Macron met with representatives from his centrist Ensemble alliance, the conservative Republicans, or LR. After the meeting, Annie Genevard from the LR rejected the idea of a coalition with any other parties.

Macron also discussed with the

Liot group, which includes members of parliament from the center-left, center and center-right, as well as the radical Left group. However, none of these groups made any public statements after their consultations with Macron.

Meeting with Le Pen

On Monday, the president hosted far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen for rare talks, AFP reported. The three-time National Rally, or RN, presidential candidate called after the meeting for an extraordinary session of parliament so MPs would be able to immediately depose any new government in a confidence vote.

"I don't want a prime minister to have a month to implement by decree a toxic policy that would be dangerous for the French people," Le Pen said.

Laurent Jacobelli, an MP and spokesman for the RN, has told French TV BFM that his party would censure any government that includes hard-left France Unbowed or Green ministers. "Those who abuse democracy have no place at Matignon or in any ministry," he said on Friday. Matignon refers to the official residence of the French prime minister.

Another RN lawmaker, Julien Odoul, told Radio Monte Carlo on Friday that he believes it is impossible to govern France "without the National Rally" and the "11 million French people" who voted for the RN, emphasizing they "are not second-class citizens".

Beyond the RN, Macron's alliance and the LR also threatened to censure any government that includes ministers from France Unbowed.

Meanwhile, Jean-Luc Melenchon, leader of France Unbowed, has been playing a strategic game. Speaking on French national TV TF1 on Saturday, he challenged "the leaders of the three Macronist parties and the right", asking whether they would renounce censure of a Castets government if it did not include any France Unbowed ministers.

"If you say no, we'll know the real issue isn't the presence of (France Unbowed) ministers but the NFP program itself," he added.

Faure said Melenchon is setting the stage for France Unbowed to support a Castets government without participating directly. "The excuse of (France Unbowed) ministers' presence no longer holds."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Trail of destruction

People look at a burned vehicle torched by gunmen who killed passengers on a highway in Musa Khel, Balochistan Province, Pakistan, on Monday. Terrorist attacks on police stations, railway lines and highways in the province, coupled with retaliatory security operations, killed more than 60 people, officials said on Monday. RAHMAT KHAN / AP



UN lowers Latin America growth forecast

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires, Argentina
For China Daily

Productivity dropping and climate change are presenting significant challenges for the economic development in Latin America, according to a recent UN report.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, or ECLAC, downgraded this year's regional growth forecast to 1.8 percent, significantly lower than its previous projection of 2.1 percent, indicating the challenges and potential risks the region faces.

The ECLAC also reported a record-low growth rate of 0.9 percent last year, which is "lower than the 2.0 percent recorded in the 'lost decade' of the 1980s", it said. It attributed the slowdown to high inflation, limited room for monetary policy to have an effect, an uncertain economic environment and relatively low employment rates.

"The ECLAC report discusses some significant challenges," said Luis Ignacio Roman Morales, an economics professor at the Auton-

omous University of Nayarit in Mexico. "Not only are there productivity issues, but there are also implications from climate change. Export prices for Latin American products may also change too. As a result, the employment growth rate has been low."

The report said Latin America and the Caribbean could face additional economic challenges because of weaker growth forecasts from its main trading partners.

Export sector

Santiago Bustelo, who holds a PhD in international politics from Fudan University in China, said one of the keys to demonstrating successful development and economic growth is having a strong export sector.

Asian countries such as China, Japan and South Korea "saw a big boost in growth that went hand in hand with building up a strong, competitive sector for exporting goods", Bustelo told China Daily.

Chile and Israel, on the other hand, are examples of smaller countries with lower overall economic

growth compared with China and South Korea, but which demonstrate highly competitive export sectors in industrial goods, commodities and technology, he said.

"South American countries can also develop strong export industries in these areas, which are fundamental for driving economic growth," he said.

Despite the gloomy economic outlook, the ECLAC projected improved growth of 2.3 percent for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2025.

Bustelo emphasized the need for targeted policies to develop strong export sectors.

"The development of an export sector through targeted policies, both industrial and technological, as well as complementary macro-economic policies that encourage private sector investment, along with public investment, is critical to ensuring satisfactory economic performance and sustained high growth over the medium and long run," he said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Briefly

THAILAND Flash floods after heavy rains kill 22

Flash floods caused by heavy monsoon rains in Thailand have killed 22 people in recent days, disaster officials said on Monday. Nineteen others were injured and more than 30,000 households have been affected in 13 provinces over the past 10 days, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said. It

also warned that 31 provinces in the kingdom's north and northeast were facing possible flash floods until Thursday.

TUNISIA Ministers sacked over 'national security'

Tunisian President Kais Saied has said "national security" concerns were behind a sweeping cabinet reshuffle ahead of Oct 6 elections.

Saied appointed 19 new cabinet members on Sunday and replaced his foreign and defense ministers. In a speech, he said the decision was because of a "lack of coherence" in his government and the "irresponsibility" of some ministers whose job was "to help ... and not make choices beyond those determined" by the presidency. The reshuffle, he said, prioritized "national security".

AGENCIES—XINHUA



Residents of the Israeli coastal town of Acre check the damage caused by a rocket fired from Lebanon on Sunday. JACK GUEZ / AFP

Failure of Gaza deal sparks suspicion

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadaily.com

The latest round of Gaza cease-fire talks ended with no deal, raising suspicions of delaying tactics and a diplomatic smoke screen of a joint "Israel-US project serving Israel's campaign of destruction", experts say.

Despite optimistic statements from the United States, the resumption of weeklong talks in Cairo, Egypt — and earlier in Doha, Qatar — ended on Sunday with neither Hamas nor Israel reaching an agreement.

Majd Abuamer, a researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, said the US cannot be seen merely as a supporter of Israel or a mediator in the cease-fire talks, noting that talks are focused on technical and logistical details.

"The real objective behind the ongoing negotiations in Doha and Cairo ... is to divert attention from the situation in Gaza and to give Israel more time to complete its campaign of destruction," Abuamer said.

Israel had sustained its retaliatory military operations amid talks even throughout the Paris Olympics, issuing evacuation orders as it continued bombing schools and refugee camps.

The health ministry in Gaza said on Monday that at least 40,435 people have been killed in the conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants, now in its 11th month.

Abuamer said it should not be forgotten that reaching a cease-fire agreement does not necessarily entail ending the military campaign.

"Despite reaching agreements, Israel often fails to adhere to them

and instead continues with its policy of assassinations and bombings, which reignites the conflict," he said.

Hamas said its delegation demanded that Israel accept what had been agreed upon on July 2, based on US President Joe Biden's proposal and the United Nations Security Council resolution. Xinhua News Agency reported.

Furthermore, the delegation reportedly stressed that any agreement must include a permanent cease-fire, Israel's complete withdrawal from Gaza, the return of residents to their homes and prisoner-hostage exchange.

Intense point

One of the intense points of contention was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demand that the Israel Defense Forces continue to be deployed along the Philadelphi Corridor that stretches the entirety of Gaza's border with Egypt, US media outlet Axios reported.

On Friday, White House national security spokesman John Kirby, speaking to reporters, denied that the cease-fire talks were on the verge of collapse. Israeli authorities have said they will join the talks on their terms.

"The cease-fire talks in Cairo seem less about peace and more about power plays, with progress being announced but nothing concrete emerging," Arhama Siddiq, a research fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad in Pakistan, told China Daily.

Negotiations have become "a well-worn tool in the US-Israel strategy" that gives the appearance of

diplomacy but the situation on the ground tells a much different story, Siddiq said.

"The 'narrative of progress' allows Israel to continue its operations, with each passing day bringing more destruction to Gaza, she said.

"It's hard to ignore the suspicion that this is a delaying tactic, a diplomatic smoke screen behind which Israel carries out its military objectives.

"The US speaks of progress, but the lack of tangible results suggests the talks are more about stalling than stopping the violence."

The question of the Philadelphi Corridor only deepens the deadlock, with its future tied to broader strategic goals rather than immediate peace, she said.

Furthermore, the delay seems to work in Israel's favor, she added. "Each day the talks stretch out, more ground is covered, more homes are destroyed, more lives are lost."

Late on Sunday, Israel issued new evacuation orders for Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, forcing more families to flee, saying its forces intended to act against Hamas and others operating in the area.

Recently, Israel has issued several evacuation orders across Gaza, the most since the beginning of the conflict, prompting an outcry from Palestinians, the UN and relief officials over the reduction of humanitarian zones and the absence of safe areas.

The Deir al-Balah municipality says Israeli evacuation orders have so far displaced 250,000 people.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Forum calls for joint efforts to tap potential

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

Asian countries should work closely to unleash their full potential of comparative advantages for the common benefit of all, making collective efforts and converging to shape a brighter future for the Asia-Pacific region, global and regional leaders say.

Speaking at the Boao Forum for Asia Roundtable in Bangkok on Monday, Dennis Francis, president of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, called for Asia-Pacific countries to embrace open regionalism, handle regional affairs with mutual respect and equal rights, accelerate regional economic integration, and ensure the stability and resilience of global supply chains.

"The Asia-Pacific region is shaping the future of international cooperation, innovation and progress," he said. "By amplifying the diverse voices, perspectives and actions across Asia, the roundtable's esteemed gathering undoubtedly plays a vital role in fostering peace and prosperity on a regional and global scale."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang

Yi sent a congratulatory letter to the opening of the roundtable, which is themed "Future of the World: from the Perspective of Asia".

"We should continue to promote deeper integration and better connectivity, pursue innovation-driven development, strengthen cooperation in such areas as new industrialization and artificial intelligence, and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces to create a future full of opportunities for all countries in Asia," said Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

Focusing on Asia

As the host country, China will continue to support the forum in focusing on Asia, keeping a global perspective, promoting cooperation and leading the way for the future, making greater contributions to the common development of countries in Asia and the world, he said.

Secretary-General of the forum Zhang Jun, in his welcome remarks, said that at this historic juncture for the world, Asia is duty-bound to take up its responsibility, strengthen

strategic coordination, come up with Asian solutions and play a greater constructive role in shaping the shared future.

Chairman of the forum Ban Ki-moon urged the region to seize opportunities in seeking shared future of sustained peace and sustainable development.

"We are expected to bring Asian perspectives and solutions to those global challenges. No country can manage the challenges on its own. The only way out is the strong and sustained international cooperation," he said.

As one of the 29 initiating countries of the forum, Thailand called for all Asian countries to unite together, turn the tide in the global economy and unlock the untapped economic potential in new markets and industries of the future.

"We firmly believe that the multilateral system, with the UN at its core, remains critical in overcoming these challenges," said Eksiri Pintaruchi, Thailand's permanent secretary for foreign affairs. "The UN is undeniably the most inclusive platform, where the Global South can speak loudest and best heard."

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THE HANDS OF TIME

Editor's note: Traditional arts and crafts are supreme examples of Chinese cultural heritage. China Daily is publishing this series to show how master artisans are using dedication and innovation to inject new life into heritage. In this installment, we unveil the timeless beauty of Chinese wooden furniture.



Classical wooden furniture made by Liu Gengsheng and Ou Shengchun. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Furnishing a career steeped in heritage

Making seats that suit today's needs while honoring tradition, Li Yingxue reports.



The smooth, timeworn contours of a wooden chair seem to whisper tales from another era. Along its armrests, the elegant curves embody centuries of mastery, each line an echo of the artisans who crafted it.

But upon closer examination, this seemingly ancient chair has secrets to tell. A sleek cushion now rests against the back, its curve subtly adjusted for modern ergonomics. Hidden beneath each leg are small wheels, allowing this sturdy piece of craftsmanship to glide across the floor.

This chair, a product of tradition fused with innovation, was created by Liu Gengsheng, 60, a master of Beijing-style wooden furniture. The craftsmanship behind it has been recognized as a national-level intangible cultural heritage since 2008.

It is a meticulous reproduction of a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) relic from the Palace Museum, adorned with traditional motifs and intricate openwork carvings.

The design adheres strictly to ancient methods — no screws, only *summao* (mortise-and-tenon) joints, with each leg carved from the same piece of wood.

But Liu's work represents more than just craftsmanship; it is a glimpse into a tradition that stretches far beyond his workshop.

Across China, traditional wooden furniture has long been admired not only for its meticulous construction and visual appeal, but also for the cultural stories embedded within its patterns and motifs — stories that reflect centuries-old aspirations for harmony and prosperity.

Today, this craftsmanship endures thanks to the dedicated efforts of artisans like Liu.

But making these pieces is only the beginning. The tradition extends into artifact restoration, antique reproduction and contemporary design. In each of these areas, artisans, restoration specialists and designers are preserving a dual heritage — the practical skills of woodworking and the deep cultural roots that ground these creations.

The result is a bridge between the past and future, where handcrafted furniture serves as a functional piece and a vessel of China's cultural legacy, inviting modern audiences to connect with tradition through the objects they use every day.

Liu has spent over 40 years crafting wooden furniture. He was born and raised in Beijing's Luban Hutong, an alley that was named after the legendary master carpenter Lu Ban and teeming with artisans and craft shops.

At 19, Liu followed his father's footsteps, joining the century-old brand Longshuncheng to learn the craft of Beijing-style wooden furniture.

Beyond crafting, Liu has mastered the skills of restoring antique furniture. In 1999, he established a restoration center.

"Some customers bring us nothing more than a pile of wood, barely more than kindling. We approach each piece with a genuine desire to restore it to its former glory," Liu says.

"From a single piece, you can glimpse the design philosophy and craftsmanship of the time, and also the continuity of Chinese culture."

In recent years, Liu and his team have been involved in numerous restoration projects for artifacts from the Palace Museum.

"Restoration is a meticulous process," Liu says. "Like a traditional Chinese medicine doctor, we start with observation — recording the piece's era, techniques, materials and even the meaning behind its patterns."

"You can't just disassemble a piece of history casually; it poses a risk of causing additional damage. Each component must be meticulously labeled, disassembled according to the precise mortise-and-tenon technique, and then reassembled once the restoration process is finished."

Liu stresses the importance of preserving the original character of each piece. "The principle of 'restoring to the original' is as old as 'old' is the first professionals in the country to delve into the reproduction of antique wooden furniture. In his pursuit of reinventing traditional wooden pieces, he upholds a principle of "90 percent tradition, 10 percent innovation," focusing on refining even the minutest details.

For instance, in the adaptation of a classical "throne chair" for contemporary homes, he and his team adjust the chair's proportions, reducing its size and lowering the height of the backrest to enhance its functionality.

Recognizing that these chairs are usually placed in living rooms, they design double- and triple-seater versions, creating a series of sofa sets.

They also design new furniture for modern living spaces, such as TV cabinets and writing desks, incorporating practicality and traditional aesthetics.

"Today's consumers have an increasingly sophisticated sense of aesthetics. More people want to decorate their homes with the beauty of traditional wooden furniture and are willing to spend time understanding and appreciating its charm," he says.

Alongside his work, Ou also curates a collection of classical Chinese furniture from both domestic and international sources.

"Our passion for classical furniture remains undiminished, and we continue to be inspired by the wisdom and skills of ancient artisans," he says.

Since 2018, Ou has been preparing to open an exhibition hall in Zhongshan, Guangdong province, gathering antique furniture pieces and related materials from around the world.

In May, the exhibition hall officially opened to the public, offering free admission. Exhibits on display introduce the history of traditional Chinese furniture, and the craft and culture of traditional woodworking, as well as the collection of Wang Shixiang (1914-2009), a well-known scholar of traditional Chinese furniture.

One standout exhibit, titled *The Birth of a Chair*, breaks down every part of a wooden chair, suspending each piece in midair, so visitors can clearly see the various mortise-and-tenon joints that connect them.

"Through these exhibits, we aim to showcase the craftsmanship, artistry, culture and historical evolution of traditional Chinese woodworking and furniture," Ou says.

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In May, the exhibition hall officially opened to the public, offering free admission. Exhibits on display introduce the history of traditional Chinese furniture, and the craft and culture of traditional woodworking, as well as the collection of Wang Shixiang (1914-2009), a well-known scholar of traditional Chinese furniture.

One standout exhibit, titled *The Birth of a Chair*, breaks down every part of a wooden chair, suspending each piece in midair, so visitors can clearly see the various mortise-and-tenon joints that connect them.

"Through these exhibits, we aim to showcase the craftsmanship, artistry, culture and historical evolution of traditional Chinese woodworking and furniture," Ou says.

He is one of the first professionals in the country to delve into the reproduction of antique wooden furniture. In his pursuit of reinventing traditional wooden pieces, he upholds a principle of "90 percent tradition, 10 percent innovation," focusing on refining even the minutest details.

For instance, in the adaptation of a classical "throne chair" for contemporary homes, he and his team adjust the chair's proportions, reducing its size and lowering the height of the backrest to enhance its functionality.

Recognizing that these chairs are usually placed in living rooms, they design double- and triple-seater versions, creating a series of sofa sets.

They also design new furniture for modern living spaces, such as TV cabinets and writing desks, incorporating practicality and traditional aesthetics.

"Today's consumers have an increasingly sophisticated sense of aesthetics. More people want to decorate their homes with the beauty of traditional wooden furniture and are willing to spend time understanding and appreciating its charm," he says.

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From top: The creation of traditional wooden furniture entails many steps, such as designing, cutting and carving. Well-known inheritors of the craft include Liu Gengsheng, 60; Xu Jiansheng, 70; and Ou Shengchun, 65. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chair components and various types of wood are displayed at the exhibition *Seat of Honor* in Zhongshan, Guangdong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Traditional craft of woodworking is still widely applied in furniture making, such as chairs, wardrobes and screens pictured above. It's also featured in traditional architecture, like wooden window (above left). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

This exhibition and its interactive activities work together, making it one of the most successful events we've ever hosted." Yang Fuhua, curator at the Summer Palace Museum

"Chairs are frequently moved and need to be both sturdy and lightweight. Ancient craftsmen invested immense skill and creativity into chair-making. It's a testament to their craftsmanship that well-made ancient

their frequent use and close interaction with people, chairs must balance aesthetics with comfort.

Unlike some exhibitions that may require endless footslogging, this curated collection of Chinese wooden furniture — in actual fact just a few dozen pieces — invited viewers to linger.

Visitors could not only admire the craftsmanship but also get hands-on experience by assembling *summao* (mortise-and-tenon) joints and encounter the distinct aromas of various types of wood.

For over three months, the exhibition *Elegance of Woodcraft: Timeless Beauty*, which concluded on Sunday, had drawn more than 1 million visitors to the Summer Palace Museum and its Deheyuan, or Garden of Virtue and Harmony, in Beijing.

The exhibits traced the development of classical Chinese wooden furniture, its cultural significance, and the fusion of the East and the West in the designs dating to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. On display were 83 premium pieces and sets of furniture.

In recent years, smaller, more refined editions of traditional Chinese wooden furniture have become popular.

Artisans and cultural relic restorers, collaborating with curators, have used modern exhibition techniques to showcase the intricate craftsmanship, artistry and profound cultural legacy inherent in Chinese wooden furniture, breathing new life into this intangible cultural heritage.

The Summer Palace exhibition was held to celebrate the 110th anniversary of the palace's public opening. It focused on Ming and Qing furniture relics from classical gardens, encompassing a wide range of traditional furniture styles and types.

Yang Fuhua, curator and conservator at the cultural relics protection department of the Summer Palace, explains that this exhibition offers an immersive experience by displaying most of the artifacts without protective cases, allowing visitors to see them up close.

"A dragon chair may seem small in a palace. But in the exhibition, it's as big as a double bed," says Yang.

"We closely monitor temperature, humidity and maintain the relics regularly, with infrared sensors in place to minimize any external impact."

At Deheyuan, furniture was arranged to re-create scenes from ancient paintings, while the display at the Summer Palace Museum focused on explaining the cultural significance of the furniture, including its ties to rituals and social traditions.

Compared to the Forbidden City, Summer Palace furniture feels more relaxed, featuring pieces like root-carved screens and root-made chairs, Yang says.

"Garden furniture often features natural designs like bamboo or plum blossoms and is arranged more freely," he explains.

One section showcased woodworking tools, along with illustrations explaining the process. Another highlighted how royal furniture was made, starting with a designer's sketch, followed by the emperor's approval

"Our goal is to bring intangible cultural heritage into every home, increase the appreciation for wooden furniture and attract more enthusiasts to the industry to ensure the continued preservation of this craft," Liu says.

Contact the writer at liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn

The exhibition *Seat of Honor* showcases 50 rare chairs at the Ou's Traditional Woodwork Exhibition Hall in Zhongshan, Guangdong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The exhibition *Seat of Honor* showcases 50 rare chairs at the Ou's Traditional Woodwork Exhibition Hall in Zhongshan, Guangdong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE



A tower displaying smiling Buddha faces at the Bayon Temple in the Angkor complex, Cambodia.
GU JI-DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Moss, fungi and lichen may seem inconspicuous but they can damage cultural relics, or, conversely, protect them from erosion. This dual functionality provides a broad selection of research topics and attracts multidisciplinary scholars to continuously explore and innovate effective measures for conservation.

Domestic and foreign academic efforts in this field over the past decade, based on cases conducted under different climates and of different types of cultural relics, were reviewed at the second International Symposium on Biodeterioration and Protection of Cultural Heritage, held at the Dunhuang Academy in Northwest China's Gansu province in June.

Unlike museum collections, kept in a dry and sterile environment, large outdoor artifacts are subject to weathering and undesirable effects from organisms, or biodeterioration, says Gu Ji-Dong, professor at the Guangdong Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Shantou, Guangdong province.

He cites the Giant Buddha of Leshan in Southwest China's Sichuan province, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as an example. The 71-meter-tall Buddha statue has long been plagued by mosses, lichens, mold and weeds growing on it. Parts of the Buddha's face, at times, have taken on a black hue as seen in media coverage, despite continuous monitoring and protection.

An internationally acclaimed microbiologist, Gu used to work for Harvard University in the United States and the University of Hong Kong, and now also serves as editor-in-chief of the academic journal, *International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation*.

Gu explains that in China and many other countries, most cultural relics conservators have an educational background in chemistry or materials science. Upon seeing dark spots on murals, for example, they naturally tend to analyze the chemical substances and reactions, before they realize it's actually the microbes that are causing the color change and damage.

"Preservation measures for large outdoor artifacts ultimately aim to prolong their survival in the natural environment.

"As microbiologists, we want to identify the microbes that are responsible for specific types of damage and how they cause such damage chemically, and by employing intervention measures we can minimize the activities of these microbes as much as possible or prevent their outbreak and attack, so that protection can be achieved by slowing down the damage to allow future generations to appreciate our cultural heritage," he adds.

He also expresses concern that researchers should not focus simply on the microbial communities colonized on the relics, but also pay more attention to their interactions with the surrounding environment and the materials of their making — more specifically, their reactions to changes in sunshine, water and salts — in order to form more comprehensive conservation plans based on scientific results.

For the past two decades, Gu has been continuously joining conservation projects for the Angkor Archaeological Park in Cambodia, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in collaboration with his Japanese counterparts to study and protect the Bayon Temple.

Gu's report during the symposium on June 21, working with Yoko Katayama, researcher at the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, suggests that under the tropical climate, colonization of plants and microbes on stone allows more fluctuation in thermal and water regimes, resulting in dissolution of selective minerals in sandstone, which enlarges its pores and porosity.

The soluble salts, when concentrated in the drying process, can be transported back into sandstone by capillary action, triggering salting-out effect. The outer surface of the sandstone structures can peel off by the internal pressure generated by the crystallization of salts.

Their research expounds on how microbes can contribute in a number of ways to affect the physical and chemical processes involved in sandstone deterioration and has demonstrated how biochemical reactions driven by microbes facilitate the accumulation of highly concentrated nitrate on the sandstone of Bayon Temple, while dissolution of calcite in sandstone further increases



Scientists brainstorm heritage biothreats

Weather is not the only factor as experts work together to protect relics, Fang Aiqing and Ma Jingna report.



Top: Scholars from China, Japan and the United States, including microbiologists Yoko Katayama (second left) and Gu Ji-Dong (second right), at a conservation program for the Bayon Temple, Cambodia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Above left: Chinese and foreign participants of the second International Symposium on Biodeterioration and Protection of Cultural Heritage held at the Dunhuang Academy in Gansu province visit the Mogao Caves on June 22. WU FASI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above right: Microbiologist Sun Qun (right) and her student taking samples of soil around ancient ivory in Pit No 7 at the Sanxingdui Ruins in Guanghan, Sichuan province, in July 2021. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

water retention and therefore improves microbial colonization and activities.

All these findings indicate the urgency to formulate a holistic approach to investigate the biodeterioration mechanisms of Angkor's sandstone temples and monuments, centered particularly on the materials-water-microbiome continuum, according to Gu.

As cycles of sulfur, nitrogen and carbon catalyzed by microbes can accelerate the corrosion of sandstone, intervention measures against microorganisms to inhibit their proliferation by controlling available water nutrients are fundamental. And in some parts of the Bayon Temple, they endeavor to improve drainage to keep the sandstone surface dry, Gu adds.

Climate concern

Ten years have passed since the Dunhuang Academy hosted the first edition of this symposium. This year's event, joined by more than 100 researchers and conservation practitioners from China, Italy, France, Spain and Japan, also serves as part of the academy's celebration of the 80th anniversary of its founding.

Gu is among the microbiologists who attended both editions of the symposium held at the academy, which oversees the Mogao Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and several other relics sites in Gansu, such as the Majijishan Grottoes in Tianshui and the Beishiku Temple (North Grotto Temple) in Qingyang.

He got in touch with cultural relics preservation practitioners on the Chinese mainland shortly after returning from the US to teach in Hong Kong in 1999, and cooperated several years later with the Dunhuang Academy and Lanzhou University.

Both are among the earliest organizations in China to study microorganisms' influence on cultural relics, according to Wu Fasi, deputy director of the academy's Conservation Institute.

In 2007, when he was a graduate student at the university, Wu joined a project to study whether increasing visitors to the Mogao Caves would bring changes to the concentration, quantity and variety of airborne microorganisms inside and outside the grottoes.

That study provides scientific proof for

optimizing cave tourism and defining tourist capacity, and ever since, the academy and the university have been continuously conducting research programs and training professionals together in this regard.

Even though not many research teams in China were studying the microbiological influence on cultural relics 10 years ago, the academy and the university, together with the International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation Society, managed to initiate the first ever symposium in China specifically focused on biodeterioration of cultural relics and the corresponding preservation measures.

That event also saw participants from the Chongqing China Three Gorges Museum, the Shanghai Museum, Guangdong Museum, as well as the Cold and Arid Regions Environmental and Engineering Research Institute attached to the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

This year's symposium covered a large variety of topics and fully demonstrated the progress achieved over the past 10 years.

Climate change has brought challenges for cultural heritage preservation as cave temples, earthen relics and some ancient architecture in the open are more sensitive to the impact of the global phenomenon. Higher temperatures, extreme storms and prolonged high humidity can exacerbate or trigger biodeterioration on the relics, Wu says.

Located amid verdant forests and immersed in a warm and rainy environment, the Majijishan Grottoes, built in the 5th century and one of China's most well-known cave temples, are suffering from periodic microbial outbreaks on the murals and clay sculptures due to increasing rainfall in recent years.

In July 2018, staff members spotted some white mycelia on murals. Researchers from the Dunhuang Academy, Lanzhou University and the Guangdong Technion-Israel Institute of Technology confirmed that these were mainly the mass of interwoven filaments of fungi and actinomycetes — filamentous or rod-shaped bacteria.

They then managed to compare, experiment and establish a technical process, combined by applying biocides and tools like soft brushes and modified vacuum pumps, to clean and control microbial

mycelia on the murals.

Moreover, various animals from the Sciuridae family, such as Chinese rock squirrels and complex-toothed flying squirrels, like to scramble in and around the Majijishan Grottoes, nesting and excreting there.

Their brownish black excreta — solid and liquid — were widely distributed in the grottoes, on the cliffs and the trestle paths, as well as in the beam holes.

He Dongpeng, research associate at the Dunhuang Academy, says that based on experiments, they used bio-enzyme reagents such as artificial saliva to clean the contaminated areas, while setting up metal spikes and spraying capsaicin, a chili pepper extract, to deter animals.

Feng Youzhi, professor at the Nanjing Forestry University in Jiangsu province, introduced how his team, in collaboration with the Dunhuang Academy, investigated the Dahuting Tombs of the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) in Zhengzhou, Central China's Henan province, where symbiotic relationships between species have led to microbial outbreak in the subterranean relics.

To be more specific, the Actinobacteria attract springtails by releasing a pheromone called geosmin and, with the help of the insects, migrate into the tombs. The Actinobacteria can inhibit other microbial species but proliferate to become the predominant species on the tomb walls and murals.

Another study conducted by Sichuan University and Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute aims to inhibit microbial growth on ancient ivory excavated from the sacrificial pits of the Sanxingdui Ruins in Guanghan, Sichuan province.

According to Sun Qun, professor at Sichuan University, most fungi and bacteria on the ivories derived from the in-situ soil in the pits. During excavation, cleansing and storage, human activities contributed to the change of microbiota on the ivories.

The researchers identified the key corrosion microorganisms and therefore developed an antibacterial agent from their patented bacillus, and this has been proved effective in controlling microbial biodeterioration on the ivories with sufficient safety.

However, nature has passed its blessing on these epitomes of human wisdom, exemplified in the Great Wall, located mostly in arid



The Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu province. FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY

and semiarid regions of northern China, suffering from harsh climates, rain and wind erosion. Some parts of the Great Wall date back more than 2,000 years.

A research team from China Agricultural University and the Institute of Soil and Water Conservation under the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Water Resources carried out an investigation into some 600 kilometers of rammed earth Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces, apart from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

They found that biocrusts, biological soil crusts that consist of mosses, lichens and photosynthetic bacteria such as cyanobacteria, cover 67 percent of these sections and serve as stabilizers, sacrificial layers and drainage roofs.

These biocrusts enhance the Great Wall's strength by reducing the effects of wind speed, raindrop kinetic energy and runoff scouring force, buffering temperature fluctuations, preventing infiltration, promoting soil mechanical stability and reducing erodibility and salinity, according to Xiao Bo, professor at China Agricultural University.

Expanding community

For the organizers and participants of the symposium, the biggest progress — and joy — was seeing an increasing number of young scholars from various professional backgrounds join this undertaking, yielding impressive academic fruits.

"Both editions of the symposium invited foreign scholars to come and see what their Chinese counterparts are doing, share knowledge and exchange ideas," microbiologist Gu says, adding that the latest event has witnessed a great expansion of this particular academic community.

Wu says, over the past decade, more and more research institutions realized that the combination of zoology, botany and microbiology with archaeology and cultural relics conservation is appealing and has the potential to produce notable academic achievements, resulting in growing emphasis on cultivating graduates and doctoral students in this interdisciplinary field.

Gu says, "These hardworking young people have already made impressive achievements, but they have an even brighter future ahead of them. I hope this symposium can serve as a reference for them to recognize their position in this academic field and better plan for their future directions."

With talent and technologies, China has a great opportunity to advance cultural heritage conservation — going into detail, doing the work earnestly and thoroughly and developing its own model systems of research work, he adds.

Microbiologist Clara Enza Urzi, associate professor at the University of Messina, Italy, and president-designate of IBBS, stressed the importance of a common language shared among the multiple disciplines involved in cultural relics conservation — achieved from exchanges and applied in turn to promote exchanges — to deal with the attractive complexity of this academic field.

She says it's important for China to have this community, with enthusiastic young people, open to the rest of the world. She calls for more exchanges and cooperation, either personal connections or academicities such as visiting scholar programs.

The Italian scholar also suggests that the younger generation, both of China and the rest of the world, should be more aware of the works of their predecessors and foreign counterparts.

Guo Qinglin, deputy director of the Dunhuang Academy, says that conducting interdisciplinary research is the key path and inevitable trend to achieve breakthrough development in cultural heritage conservation.

He adds that in the future the academy will proactively build a more open platform to deepen cooperation and exchanges with peer researchers and, through multidisciplinary collaborative innovation, contribute to the study, preservation and sustainable utilization of the cultural heritage of Dunhuang and all over the world alike.

"After all, in heritage conservation, collaboration surpasses competition. It brings people together," he says.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Sanctions on Russia-related trade unwarranted, high- and heavy-handed

It is only natural that those countries whose targeted entities have been conducting normal business with Russia according to international law should vent their spleen at the US' long-arm jurisdiction, as it impedes normal international economic and trade exchanges, and harms the stability of the global industry and supply chains.

The United States Treasury Department announced sweeping sanctions on hundreds of entities in Russia, Europe, Asia and the Middle East on Friday, accusing them of providing products and services that enable Russia "to sustain its war effort and evade sanctions". Among them are some companies and individuals from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, with the US Department of State saying it was concerned by "the magnitude of dual-use goods" being exported from China to Russia.

The move bars the sanctioned entities that are mainly supplying machine tools and components to Russian companies from trading with US companies without gaining a special license that is practically unobtainable.

The Chinese Commerce Ministry is fully justified in expressing Beijing's anger and opposition to the US move, as it is an unwarranted unilateral action that undermines the international trade order and undercuts international efforts to resolve the Ukraine crisis in peace. It said that it will adopt necessary measures to safeguard the rights and interests of the country's businesses.

While it frequently claims to champion "the rules-based order", the US has repeatedly been the country that has run roughshod over it. The Ukraine crisis is only an excuse the US has used to expand its sanctions regime.

Since the conflict in Ukraine began, the US has pushed its long-practiced economic coercion to the extreme, slapping thousands of sanctions on Russian companies and financial institutions, with no regard to their legitimacy or their broader effects.

At the same time, it has increasingly found fault with other countries for maintaining normal trade ties with Russia and used this as the justification for casting its net and wielding its sanctions baton against numerous foreign companies and individuals that have normal business ties with Russia. As it has pulled its net in more and more aggressively, a growing number of Chinese companies and individuals have fallen victim to it.

The fact that the Ukraine conflict has become a long-running crisis shows sanctions cannot resolve it, a truth that has been proved before. Not to mention that the US' long-arm jurisdiction has sabotaged international relations and stoked tensions and confrontation in the world arena.

The US sanctions regime, like its repeated actions to supply ammunition to Ukraine, is tantamount to fanning the flames of the conflict in Ukraine. What the US has done has only proved true the speculation that Washington does not want the Ukraine war to end any time soon as it intends to fish for more strategic and economic gains from it.

With the latest China-related sanctions being announced just a few days before US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to Beijing, the possibility cannot be ruled out that Washington is collecting some bargaining chips ahead of the discussions. Or, more probably, it shows the US has little sincerity in building mutual trust and is ratcheting up the tensions with China, instead of making the badly needed sincere efforts required to repair the world's most important pair of nation-to-nation ties.

Onus on US to rein in Israel's aggression

After nearly 11 months of bloodshed in Gaza, it is heartening to see both Hamas and Israel engaged in the cease-fire negotiations in Cairo that began on Thursday.

Although the high-level talks mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the United States ended on Sunday without a final agreement, they were described as "constructive" as all parties were said to be working to "reach a final and implementable agreement", and the exchanges are continuing at the Egyptian capital at lower levels in the coming days in an effort to bridge the remaining gaps.

Although Iran is not a party to the talks, it has made a tremendous contribution to the unfolding of the Cairo talks for an early cease-fire in Gaza by exercising considerable restraint. It has refrained from taking revenge for the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, in Teheran on July 31, which was widely suspected of being carried out by Israel.

After Haniyeh's death, in anticipation of Iran's retaliation against its closest ally in the Middle East that it has unconditionally been supporting with arms, intelligence and funding throughout the Gaza conflict, the US recently deployed at least two aircraft carrier strike groups along with other forces to the region. While Israel, on its part, has been carrying out large-scale military and civil preparations, indicating it expects a significant retaliation by Iran.

That Iran has so far not taken any action does not mean it will let bygones be bygones. The only reason is that Teheran would like to see the humanitarian crisis in Gaza end at an early date. And many countries, including China, have tried their best to persuade Teheran to bear the bigger picture in mind, setting the table for the Cairo talks.

That being said, all stakeholders to the talks, particularly the US, must make sincere efforts to make the talks fruitful. Even if it is only a temporary cease-fire that is agreed, it will provide the Palestinians in Gaza with the first breathing space since the Oct 7 Hamas attacks on Israel that triggered the fighting, and a window for other countries to mediate the situation.

Over the past nearly 10 months, more than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip, which is 41 kilometers long and from six to 12 km wide, with many of them women and children, according to local Palestinian sources. The 2.3 million Palestinians that are still trapped in the enclave are in a de facto state of famine due to Israel's harsh control of the region. Many rights groups have accused Israel of intentionally weaponizing hunger.

Yet the most intensive exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah in months in the northern border region between Israel and Lebanon on Sunday showed how easy it would be for the ongoing talks to be derailed. The fighting was triggered by Israel's "pre-emptive" air strikes on Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon after it detected what it said was the militant group's preparation to attack northern Israel.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply concerned" by the escalation and called on the two parties to immediately cease hostilities, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

A spokesman for the US National Security Council, Sean Savett, said US President Joe Biden was "closely monitoring" the events in Israel and Lebanon and that he has been engaged with his national security team throughout the evening. "At his direction, senior US officials have been communicating continuously with their Israeli counterparts," Savett said. "We will keep supporting Israel's right to defend itself, and we will keep working for regional stability."

With its Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Charles Brown visiting Israel, Egypt and Jordan this week, the Biden administration should take more concrete actions to control its ally's aggressiveness at this crucial juncture. The sooner Gaza is freed from the US' partisan politics, the earlier the on-and-off cease-fire talks will yield concrete results.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Strict action against truckers ensures safety of edible oil

The State Council's Food Safety Office has given its conclusion regarding tankers transporting edible oil and chemicals alternatively without cleaning the tank in between, a practice that created quite a stir after a Beijing News report exposed it in early July.

The words used by the probe team in the news release issued on Sunday are rather harsh. The joint probe team said the practice of mixing edible vegetable oil and chemicals in truck tankers was reprehensible, violates basic common sense, tramples on both moral and legal boundaries, and must be strictly punished.

The team conducting the probe included members from seven departments, namely the State Council's Food Safety Office, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Transport, the National Health Commission,

the State Administration for Market Regulation, and the National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration.

The team was so empowered and the probe so thorough that they could find out the exact location of the two trucks in question, bearing registration numbers E5476W and E6365Z, on an hour-by-hour basis from May 22 to 27. The contaminated edible oil they were carrying has also been traced to a great extent.

The success of the investigation shows the seven departments' firm, unshakable determination to ensure food safety and protect people's health.

Following the probe, three executives from the transport enterprises and two owners of the two trucks face penalties; some of whom might face criminal charges. The drivers of the two trucks have been arrested and might also face criminal charges, while three people involved in fabricating records and creating invoices

to give the impression that the tanks had been cleaned have been detained for 10 days and fines have been slapped on seven grain and oil enterprises that are also involved. The penalties levied on those held answerable, done in strict accordance with the law and the regulations, are expected to serve as a deterrent to anyone who dares even think about committing such illegal acts in the future.

The news release might bring closure to the incident but not an end to preventive measures in the future. The State Council Food Safety Office has vowed to collaborate with the several departments involved to launch crackdowns on similar illegal behaviors and make sure that edible oil is only transported in trucks meant for the purpose, after the tanks are cleaned, thus ensuring the safety of edible oil.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

Protect IP rights for greater innovation

The number of international patent applications filed by Chinese applicants through the Patent Cooperation Treaty has ranked first in the world for four consecutive years and as of June, effective registered trademarks in China had hit a new high of 45.909 million pieces.

It can be said that with the realization of a number of breakthroughs in the intellectual property cause in recent years, China has become a veritable IP power.

China always attaches great importance to the protection of intellectual property rights, comprehensively strengthening top-level design and deepening various reforms in this field. A series of important documents released in recent years on building China into an IP power, promoting the transformation and application of patents, and strengthening the building of the IPR protection system have all demonstrated China's

firm confidence in improving the IP system. The plan to establish an efficient and comprehensive IPR management system raised by the central authorities has also pointed out the direction on further strengthening IPR protection and application in China.

Since the beginning of this year, East China's Jiangsu province has actively promoted the high-level construction of national IP protection demonstration zones in Nanjing, Suzhou and Nantong, strengthening IPR protection at the source. North China's Shanxi province has launched special actions to promote patent transformation and application. By doing so it has set a precedent for other localities to emulate.

However, intellectual property infringements still take place from time to time. In particular, the rapid development of generative artificial intelligence technolo-

gy, while bringing greater value to all walks of life, is fueling a considerable risk for IP infringement. The problem of easy IP infringement but difficulty in safeguarding IPR has dampened the enthusiasm of business entities for innovation and creation. China should further strengthen IPR protection and application, increase punishment for IPR violations, and improve public services for IPR.

It should be noted that deepening reform in the field of IP and promoting the establishment of an efficient and comprehensive IP management system is much needed to stimulate innovation, promote high-level opening-up and support the construction of a high-standard market system. Only in this way can China better stimulate innovation enthusiasm and inject vitality into the source of reform and innovation.

—ECONOMIC DAILY

What They Say

Local govts obliged to build up 'housing pensions'

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said recently it is studying the feasibility of a system for housing maintenance that comprises a physical evaluation of properties, a "housing pension" and housing insurance.

Shanghai and 22 other cities have already started piloting related projects. These local governments are establishing a public fund as the housing pension along with the existing personal accounts of the property owners.

The personal account is based on the housing special maintenance fund system that has been in operation for 20 years, and people do not need to pay maintenance funds separately outside the current system.

The key measure of the

housing pension system reform is to establish the public account. And the primary purpose of the public account is to provide funds for physical checks of public housing.

The pilot cities, with the purpose of better protecting people's safety, have used the funds raised by the government for the public account.

In addition to the public account, the "housing pension" also has, as said, a personal account. The housing pension system established this time will mainly use funds raised by the government to establish the public account for "housing pensions".

According to the principle of "not increasing personal burdens and not reducing personal rights and interests", local governments will explore channels for fundraising to establish the accounts in their respective jurisdic-

tions. Therefore, the public account for "housing pension" established this time will not increase the burden on owners.

Yet due to the imperfect housing safety management mechanism and the many hidden dangers in houses, it is urgent to fill the gaps in the field of housing safety management. Therefore, the government has to assume more responsibility for the safety of existing houses, and it is urgent to implement the reform of the housing pension system.

Notably, most of the pilot cities are first- and second-tier ones with better financial conditions. But with the economy facing tremendous downward pressure and many other local governments facing financial difficulties, it remains to be seen how they will raise new funds to establish the public accounts in the reform.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Olga Migunova

China, Russia can look forward to a brighter future

More than a month has passed since the end of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, but experts across the world are still discussing and analyzing its outcomes and their likely impacts on the world, the global economy and global governance system in particular.

There is an explanation for that: the third plenary session is usually devoted to the economy, and everything that happens in the Chinese economy today directly affects the macroeconomic situation in the world.



China a stabilizing factor in global economy

China is a stabilizing factor in the global economy, because its contribution to global economic growth has long been, according to China's Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui, more than 30 percent. The stability of the Chinese economy is vital to the sustainability and progressive development of the global economy, the growth of global trade and cross-border investment. On the other hand, the decline in business activity is a sign of a future slowdown in economic growth.

That's why the world cannot afford to remain indifferent to news from China or not assess its development prospects.

The plenum was one of the main events in China's domestic politics this year, and its decisions can be considered among the most important in the history of the CPC. Many analysts have called it epochal, and I agree with this assessment.

The two other epoch-making third plenums were the third plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978 which changed the course of history by launching reform and opening-up in 1978, and the third plenum of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2013 which consolidated the policy of reform and opening-up.

The third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee was held at a key historical moment — at a time when the country is advancing Chinese modernization to realize national rejuvenation and is on the road to building a great modern socialist society that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful.

On this journey, however, China has been facing unprecedented challenges due to disruptions in the once strong industry and supply chains both within and outside the country. The disruptions can be attributed to the deterioration in the international landscape, because of increasing geopolitical uncertainties, the trade protectionist policies of and the rising anti-globalization sentiments in some economies.

That's why the resolution of the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee was prepared carefully, without unnecessary haste.

The plenum updated the strategy for further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization, and realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The main goals and directions, and timeframes for the comprehensive deepening of reform have been formulated. In particular, the plenum has decided to complete more than 300 key reform measures by 2029.

The importance the country attaches to these measures can be gauged from the fact that the Party guided by the top leader spent seven months preparing the draft documents after intense discussions, consultations and exchange of opinions. Taking into account the importance of a correct



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

understanding of the resolution of the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee, the explanations of the main provisions of the document are devoid of unnecessary discrepancies.

China, Russia cooperation not targeted at third parties

Contrary to what some Western media reports forecast about the outcome of the resolution against the backdrop of the unfolding US sanctions on Chinese entities, China has decided to focus on the domestic market to achieve sustainable growth and, at the same time, continue to deepen cooperation with other economies, seeking new points of common development. As is clear from the plenum's resolution, China will not succumb to the pressure of Western sanctions, nor will it isolate itself from the rest of the world. In fact, China has made it crystal clear that it is committed to advancing high-level opening-up and expanding

More importantly, the heads of our two countries have reached strategic agreements on radically deepening mutual cooperation between our countries.

economic and trade relations with other economies.

China's aim is to develop a more efficient socialist market economic system which focuses on expanding opening-up and promotes peaceful global development. Chinese President Xi Jinping has said for China and the United States, turning their back on each other is not an option, stressing it is unrealistic for one side to remodel the other, and conflict and confrontation have

unbearable consequences for both sides.

Meanwhile, Russian-Chinese economic cooperation is opening up new avenues of cooperation and common development, especially because Russia-China relations are based on mutual trust and mutual respect.

The bilateral relationship is based on the principles of equal partnership and mutual benefit. And the partnership got a boost during Chinese Premier Li Qiang's just-concluded visit to Russia, during which both sides promised to strengthen trade and investment while simplifying the visa regime.

Russia is among the leading economies of the world. It is a fairly large market with high purchasing power, and a resource-sufficient economy with high scientific potential. Also, the Russian and Chinese economies are complementary, which means Russia and China are beneficial to each other. That means the two countries are more likely to find more common devel-

opment grounds and achieve new breakthroughs in fields such as science and technology including information and telecommunications technology, artificial intelligence, digitalization, quantum computing, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals; and cultural exchanges; education; environmental protection; and low-carbon development.

No wonder the two countries have worked out plans to create new growth drivers by deepening cooperation between their development institutions. And the "creation of a unified national market" and "expansion of institutional openness" in China, as stated in the plenum's resolution, will help implement these plans.

What about the US strategy of imposing sanctions on Chinese entities, including Chinese multinational companies such as Huawei, and punitive tariffs on Chinese products including Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs), EV batteries and solar photovoltaic products to check China's rise? Or the harsh sanctions against Russian companies and entities to weaken Moscow?

The US' antagonistic policies toward China and Russia will only strengthen the bond between the two neighbors and help accelerate the development of a truly multipolar world order. The US' sanctions and aggressive measures against Chinese and Russian entities may also prompt the two countries to intensify their efforts to establish a permanent, more efficient and hassle-free trade-settlement mechanism over which Western sanctions will have no effect.

Russia and China have been working together to create such a mechanism, using, among other things, the institutional instruments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS. Such efforts are entirely in line with the global trend of multipolarity and democratization of international relations, which will also enrich the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era.

Amid all this, both Moscow and Beijing have made it clear that their partnership does not have an anti-West orientation. The two neighbors, unlike the US, are not looking for a "common enemy" and do not want to engage in zero-sum games, in which one country's gain is necessarily another country's loss. Instead, both countries are committed to promoting common development and realizing common prosperity.

More importantly, the heads of our two countries have reached strategic agreements on radically deepening mutual cooperation between our countries. Last year's amount of \$240 billion is far from the limit of annual trade turnover between our countries, already in the first half of this year its growth was noted compared to the previous year.

It is symbolic that the bilateral relations of strategic partnership between our countries are getting a new boost precisely on the 75th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Beijing. The updated strategy of comprehensive Chinese modernization adopted at the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee brings more opportunities. Russia and China can thus look forward to a brighter future despite all the tricks of the US-led West, including economic and other unfair and uncalled-for sanctions aimed at restraining China and Russia.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Heilongjiang village shows tradition and business can balance



Kang Bing

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The sounds of the patrolling gunboats from both China and Russia remind you that you are in Zhuaji, a village that is a perfect mix of modernity and tradition, unique and normal features.

I was sitting in a packed shuttle van traveling from Zhuaji village to Fuyuan city of Heilongjiang province. Having stayed in Fuyuan city's Zhuaji village — known as China's easternmost village — for a few days to escape Beijing's hot summer, I had boarded the village shuttle for Fuyuan, the closest city for both sightseeing and shopping.

The other seven passengers on the van were all villagers. They belonged to different ethnic minority groups including Hezhe, Han and Manchu, but they all spoke fluent Mandarin with a local accent, though. During the one-hour journey, we engaged in a friendly conversation, especially after they learned that I was a retired journalist from Beijing.

One of the villagers was carrying a few bags of vegetables to sell in the city market in the hope of getting a better price. Another villager was visiting the city to join his relatives for tomb sweeping for his late parents while the others planned to buy parts to fix their boats for the fishing season starting September. They seemed happy

about the development projects in their village, especially about the ongoing work on a modern farming project for a cost of 700 million yuan (\$98.25 million), as well as a sewage-treatment plant, and a heating plant to serve the village.

Hezhe is one of the smallest ethnic minority groups in China with a population of a little more than 5,000. Most of the Hezhe villagers earn their living by fishing in the Wusulijiang and Heilongjiang rivers. My childhood knowledge about the Hezhe people is that they wear clothes made of fish skin, catch fish using backward tools and live a miserable life that is far removed from modern civilization.

I was prepared for a cultural shock or at least some surprises when I ventured into Zhuaji only to find that people there were living a much better life than their counterparts in some other rural areas of China.

Zhuaji is a small village with 250 residents, 150 of whom belong to the Hezhe ethnic group. When China launched its poverty eradication program, Zhuaji received not only poverty alleviation funds

from different levels of government but also special funds to improve the livelihood of ethnic minority groups.

With such support, including from State-owned enterprises such as Harbin Electric Corporation, a new village headquarters was built and the villagers were persuaded to move into 100 apartments in six four-story buildings. In the apartments, they have running tap water, central heating, flush toilets and gas stoves. Sixty traditional Hezhe-style houses were also built in the new village where the villagers could open hotels and restaurants. Tourism alone has provided 150 jobs for the villagers, whose average annual income today is more than 20,000 yuan.

The unique Hezhe culture and traditions, and the beautiful view of the wetlands along the Wusulijiang River have turned Zhuaji into a hot tourist destination. It attracted more than 60,000 tourists last year. While two passengers in my van claimed they could not make as much money as they expected from their tourism-related businesses, a majority of them said

they were not giving up their traditional livelihood of fishing.

Walking in the village, I came across villagers weaving or repairing fishing nets in front of their houses or fixing their fishing boats on the river bank during the fishing season of July and August to prepare for the long and hard fishing season during the rest of the year including fishing on the frozen river when the temperature drops to minus 30-40 degrees Celsius in winter.

During the no-fishing season, fishing boats add to the beauty of the Wusulijiang River bank, making the 2-kilometer river border between China and Russia a nice place for relaxation. The sounds of the patrolling gunboats from both China and Russia remind you that you are in Zhuaji, a village that is a perfect mix of modernity and tradition, unique and normal features.

It is also one of the best places in China to escape the summer heat. When temperatures and humidity are becoming increasingly high in most parts of China, the temperature in Zhuaji is a comfortable 11-25 C. Cool!

GLOBAL VIEWS

HE YUN AND SHI ZHIQIN

Pair up

The EU and China must collaborate on global infrastructure to make the most of their respective development initiatives

In an era of increasing global polarization, two ambitious infrastructure initiatives stand at a crossroads: the European Union's Global Gateway and China's Belt and Road Initiative. While often



He Yun



Shi Zhiqin

portrayed as competitors in a zero-sum game for global influence, these two behemoths of development have more to gain from cooperation than competition. By joining forces, they could accelerate global development, foster international

understanding and create a more interconnected world.

The scale of global infrastructure needs is staggering. According to the Global Infrastructure Hub, a G20 initiative, there is a projected need of \$94 trillion in infrastructure investment by 2040, with a \$15 trillion shortfall if current investment trends continue. Neither the EU nor China can single-handedly bridge this chasm. The Global Gateway and the BRI are both putting in substantial inputs. Yet, when faced with the enormity of global needs, even these fall short. And this shortfall isn't just about roads and bridges; it represents missed opportunities for economic growth, job creation and improved living standards for billions.

Nor is cooperation just about pooling financial resources. It's about leveraging complementary strengths. The EU excels in setting high standards for environmental protection and social safeguards. For instance, its taxonomy for sustainable activities, launched in 2020, is becoming an influential benchmark for green investments. China, meanwhile, has unparalleled experience in rapid infrastructure deployment. It has built over 45,000 kilometers of high-

speed rail lines in less than two decades, more than the rest of the world combined.

Critics may argue that geopolitical tensions make such cooperation impossible. They're not wrong about the challenges. The EU has labeled China a "systemic rival" in some areas and has also expressed concerns about debt sustainability and the transparency of BRI projects.

But history shows that cooperation is possible even in the most difficult circumstances. Scientific collaboration between the US and Soviet Union continued throughout the Cold War, leading to breakthroughs in space exploration and disease eradication. Today's challenges — from climate change to pandemic prevention — demand a similar spirit of collaboration.

The potential impact is enormous. A McKinsey report suggests that bridging the global infrastructure gap could add an average of 0.6 percentage points to global GDP growth annually. Beyond economic benefits, coordinated infrastructure development could accelerate progress on multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

For example, the Port of Piraeus, once a symbol of Greece's economic woes, has been transformed into a Mediterranean shipping powerhouse. The impetus for its revival? Chinese investment through the BRI. Meanwhile, about 1,100 miles away in Zagreb, Croatia, a Chinese consortium is putting the finishing touches on the Peljesac Bridge, cofinanced by the EU. These infrastructure projects embody a crucial truth: when it comes to global infrastructure development, cooperation trumps competition.

Other areas require coordinated, multinational responses.

Take clean energy for example. The International Energy Agency estimates that annual clean energy investment in emerging markets needs to increase sevenfold by 2030 to meet climate goals. An EU-China partnership could accelerate this transition. European companies, such as Siemens Game-

sa, which are leaders in offshore wind technology, could collaborate with Chinese companies such as Goldwind, leveraging China's manufacturing scale to drastically reduce costs.

Digital infrastructure is another example. By 2025, the GSMA predicts that 72 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa will rely on the mobile internet. A joint EU-China initiative could rapidly expand broadband access. European expertise in data protection combined with Chinese advancements in rapid digital infrastructure deployment could create secure, affordable digital networks.

Of course, challenges to such cooperation exist. Differences in governance models, geopolitical tensions, mistrust and competing strategic interests cannot be ignored. However, the potential benefits far outweigh these obstacles.

To move forward, both sides must approach cooperation with open minds and a willingness to compromise. Practically, this could begin with pilot projects in mutually agreed-upon countries or sectors. Joint working groups could be established to harmonize standards and practices. A shared project evaluation framework could be developed to ensure transparency and measure impact.

The world stands at a critical juncture. By choosing cooperation over competition, a China-EU partnership would not only bridge continents with physical infrastructure but also bridge cultures and political systems in pursuit of our shared global interest. It could serve as a powerful reminder of what we can achieve when we work together.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

GULNAR SHAIMERGENOVA

Scope for peace

As China assumes the SCO's rotating chairmanship for 2024-25, it could potentially open the channels for diplomatic discussions related to the Ukraine crisis

In the over 23 years since its founding, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has brought together 26 countries and become a comprehensive regional cooperation organization with the largest territorial coverage and population in the world. This shows that in the new era, the concept of the SCO and the "Shanghai Spirit" are becoming increasingly relevant, while its influence, vitality and

appeal continue to grow.



In July, the 24th summit of the SCO took place in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. The number of international organizations partnering with the SCO has expanded, and the activities of the Special Working Group on Investments have resumed.

For the first time, the summit included the "SCO+" meeting, featuring the participation of heads of observer states, dialogue partners and leaders of international organizations. During this meeting, key global and regional issues were discussed, along with ways to expand cooperation in various areas. This initiated a new format for the SCO summits, thereby broadening the opportunities and mechanisms for the organization's cooperation with interested countries and international entities. Consequently, the SCO is poised to become a key tool for strengthening global unity and harmony.

Kazakhstan places great importance on further integrating efforts within the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, the trans-Caspian International Transport Route, and the trans-Eurasian corridors in the North-South direction, including the link between Central and South Asia. To realize these plans, the necessity of taking concrete steps to establish a partnership network of strategic ports and logistics centers within the SCO framework was emphasized.

According to Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the SCO has proven to be a unique platform where the voices and interests of all member countries are equally respected. With the active support of all SCO participants, approximately 150 events of various levels were held during Kazakhstan's chairmanship, including digital, tourism, energy and business forums, as well as the SCO Youth Council.

The current complex global situation is largely a result of a deep crisis in the entire system of international relations. In this context, the SCO needs to strengthen its stabilizing and constructive role to overcome the erosion of international law, prevent geopolitical fractures, and ultimately enhance global peace and security.

The SCO plays a significant role in the global system, where the need for peace, development, security, and effective governance is becoming increasingly apparent. In a world facing numerous challenges — from geopolitical conflicts and economic crises to climate change and cyber threats — the SCO must become a platform actively addressing these issues.

The SCO has exceptional potential to serve as a guarantor of peace and security across the Eurasian continent. Another area that needs development is an Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Sphere, which focuses on combating the three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

Strengthening cybersecurity was also identified as a critical task for summit participants. In this regard, Kazakhstan proposed developing a special mechanism for continuous information exchanges, applying best practices, and sharing advanced experiences to ensure the stable functioning of the SCO countries' information infrastructure.

Following the summit in Astana, China officially assumed the rotating chairmanship of the SCO for 2024-25 and will host the summit in 2025. China places great importance on its chairmanship and has already fully commenced its work.

For the sake of prosperity and development, the year 2025 has been declared the Year of Sustainable Development within the SCO, with a focus on implementing projects under the BRI and intensifying cooperation in science and technology. It is also crucial to enhance cultural and youth exchanges, creating platforms for dialogue and friendship.

According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the SCO has grown into a comprehensive regional cooperation organization with the largest territorial coverage and population

in the world. The organization has become a model for efforts to build new types of international relations and has provided important theoretical and practical experience in exploring ways to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

During its chairmanship of the SCO from 2024 to 2025, China is expected to collaborate with the SCO partners closely in the fields of politics, security, economy, and culture, fully leveraging the organization's role as a security shield, bridge for cooperation, bonds of friendship, and constructive force in the region.

This year has been designated as the Year of Ecology in the SCO, and the SCO Forum on Green Development held in Qingdao, Shandong province, was the first event organized by China as the rotating chair.

China emphasizes multilateralism and regional stability. Recent news highlights China's efforts to strengthen cooperation within the SCO framework, focusing on security, economic development, and cultural exchanges, reinforcing its stabilizing influence. China's diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East, including mediation efforts and investments, indicate its growing role as a neutral mediator. Recent reports suggest that China is increasingly involved in diplomatic dialogues with Middle Eastern countries, aiming to facilitate peace talks and promote economic cooperation as a path to stability. China's close ties with Russia and its principle of noninterference put it in a complex position. However, China has called for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine and a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine crisis. While it maintains a balanced stance, China's involvement in multilateral platforms such as the SCO, could potentially open channels for diplomatic discussions related to the conflict.

These points reflect China's strategic approach to international conflicts, emphasizing its role as a mediator and stabilizing force. The country's influence in these regions will largely depend on its diplomatic efforts and cooperation with other global powers.

The SCO plays a significant role in the global system, where the need for peace, development, security, and effective governance is becoming increasingly apparent. In a world facing numerous challenges — from geopolitical conflicts and economic crises to climate change and cyber threats — the SCO must become a platform actively addressing these issues.

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BUSINESS

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Forum: Shares will stabilize more in future

Institutional investors' long-term capital seen backing modernization

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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China's A-share market will further stabilize as long-term institutional investors inject more capital amid policymakers' support for their role in the capital market, said experts.

At a recent forum on deepening capital market reform, Wu Qing, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said that institutional investors should make continued efforts to improve their investment and research capabilities, growing into stronger buyers in the A-share market.

In this way, investors can likely obtain reasonable returns, with their confidence and trust in the market elevated. Institutional investors can better play their role as market stabilizers and economic growth drivers, said Wu.

The forum was attended by prominent institutional investors such as social security funds, insurance firms' asset management firms, banks' asset management arms and private equity firms.

As China enters the pivotal phase of its high-quality economic development, people's need for asset allocation, wealth management and investment products to prepare for their twilight years has risen, alongside the increasing demand for long-term equity investment, according to the forum participants.

So, more favorable accounting and tax mechanisms are needed to attract more long-term capital, they suggested. Basic infrastructure should be further completed to encourage IPOs of high-tech enterprises and companies specializing in new quality productive forces, they said.

At the forum, Wu stressed that the construction of a policy system focused on long-term investment should be promoted. Financing and investment, the two major functions of the capital market, should be coordinated to better serve China's modernization, he said.

It is the second forum that the CSRC has held within a month. In the first one in late July, the CSRC discussed with foreign securities firms and qualified foreign institutional investors hot topics like A-share companies' mergers and acquisition.

Lian Ping, president of the China Chief Economist Forum, suggested that China's stress on long-term capital can further increase foreign firms' holdings of equity assets. More long-term foreign capital may flow into China as yuan-denominated assets' investment value has become increasingly noticeable amid China's

economic recovery that has been stabilizing and the prospect of US Federal Reserve's interest rate cuts.

Jiang Guangming, senior deputy general manager of Huatai Asset Management, said that sources of China's long-term capital can be further enriched as pension and insurance funds are still the two major capital contributors. In overseas markets, insurance funds, pensions, charitable donations, companies' annuities and family funds are all constituents of long-term capital, he said.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rose a tad to 2,855.52 points on Monday while the Shenzhen Component Index gained 0.16 percent.

Meng Lei, China equity strategist of UBS Securities, said that exchange-traded funds and insurance capital have made up the bulk of incremental capital for the A-share market so far this year.

According to Shanghai-based market tracker Wind Info, stock-based ETFs received a net capital inflow of over 35 billion yuan (\$4.9 billion) during the past trading week ended Friday. More than 500 billion yuan has flowed into ETFs so far this year.

But unlike mutual funds, such capital inflows have been slow. So, their impact on A share valuations will also manifest slowly, mainly driven by improvements in company fundamentals and profitability. The indexes' rebound, which will likely be moderate, is expected in the second half of the year, said Meng.

ETFs and insurance capital enjoy special preference over companies generating higher dividends. So, individual investors should take a closer look at such companies, he said.

Agreed Chen Gang, chief strategist of Soochow Securities. Large-scale capital inflows into index-based ETFs have become a major trend in the A-share market, he said.

But during the previous market adjustment, some companies' share prices fell unreasonably, given their strong fundamentals. So, companies with positive growth and improving profitability in the medium to long run, may see their share prices corrected soon, he said.

Meanwhile, US Fed Chair Jerome Powell has sent a clearer dovish signal during the Jackson Hole meeting on Friday, indicating "the time has come" for interest rate cuts, Chen said.

Tech-driven growth enterprises listed in the A-share market may thus benefit from any interest rate cuts in the US, Chen said, citing artificial intelligence, low-altitude economy and semiconductor companies as examples.

Briefly

Fiscal revenue down 2.6% in Jan-July

China's fiscal revenue dipped 2.6 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, official data showed on Monday. The pace of decrease eased from a decline of 2.8 percent registered in the first half, said the Ministry of Finance. The January-July figure, however, rose 1.2 percent after adjustment by deducting effects from factors such as favorable policies for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that led to a higher comparative base last year, and tax reduction measures.

Fair to enhance global investment links

The 24th China International Fair for Investment & Trade will be held from Sept 8 to 11 in Xiamen, East China's Fujian province, the organizer said on Monday. Under the theme "Investment Connecting the World", the four-day event will feature nearly 50 business matchmaking activities and roadshows, signaling the country's strong commitment to cooperation and mutual benefit, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



A moped rider passes by a Sam's Club outlet in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Walmart offloads \$3.7b stake in JD

By FAN FEIFEI
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US retailer Walmart has sold its entire \$3.7 billion stake in Chinese e-commerce platform JD and is shifting the focus to its operations in China, a move industry experts said will not have an influence on the strategic partnership of the two companies, which are willing to maintain close business cooperation in the future.

They noted that the stake sale decision will allow Walmart to raise capital and concentrate on its core business in China, while the two sides can explore new cooperation models in fields like supply chain management, logistics and delivery, and digital services.

Walmart had no equity stake in JD as of Aug 20, the Chinese firm said in a filing to the Hong Kong bourse last week. JD also said it is full of confidence in future cooperation between the two sides.

Walmart said in a statement that JD has been a valued partner over the past eight years, and the US retailer was committed to a continued commercial relationship with the Chinese e-commerce giant.

"This decision allows us to focus on our strong China operations for Walmart China and Sam's Club,

and deploy capital toward other priorities," Walmart said.

The partnership between the two companies began in 2016, when Walmart sold its Chinese online grocery store, Yihoadian, in return for a 5 percent stake in JD, as part of broader push to gain a foothold in China's rapidly growing online shopping market. They also carried out a series of tie-ups in the retail and e-commerce segments, covering fulfillment and delivery.

"Walmart's decision to sell its stake in JD seems to be based on its strategic adjustment, asset optimization and its judgment in accordance with the market environment. The move signals that Walmart is reassessing its asset portfolio to better adapt to market changes and its own business growth demands," said Jiang Han, a senior researcher at the Beijing-based think tank Pan-gao Institution.

Jiang said the cooperation between JD and Walmart might have entered a new stage, as it is not limited to the equity level, but is shifting to a more flexible and diversified business cooperation model.

The US retailer also said it will maintain a commercial relationship with JD, which signifies that JD still occupies an important position in

Walmart's business layout in China, Jiang said, adding the move to sell JD's shares will not have a substantial impact on the established relationship between the two companies, and might bring about new cooperation opportunities for them over the long run.

Shen Meng, director of Beijing-based boutique investment bank Chanson & Co, said Walmart aspired to seize the opportunities brought by the rapid growth of China's e-commerce market by initially investing in JD, adding that the appearance of emerging platforms has had a great impact on traditional e-commerce enterprises in recent years, while Walmart's decision to sell its stake in JD indicates it is adjusting its China strategy.

Walmart has increasingly focused on building up its own China business. The company reported a 17.7 percent year-on-year increase in revenue from its China business to \$4.6 billion in the second quarter on the back of strong growth in its Sam's Club warehouse chain and its digital offerings.

Membership income in China from its Sam's Club business grew 26 percent year-on-year as member counts continued to increase. The company currently has 48 Sam's Club stores in China.

China's role in gold market to grow: WGC

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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The Chinese gold market, which is evolving from a follower to a leader, is expected to play a bigger role globally in the years to come, said the top executive of the World Gold Council.

"Thanks to strong Chinese economic growth over the past decades, China has secured a leading position in the global gold market. For over 10 consecutive years, China has been the world's largest gold consumer. And for an impressive 15 consecutive years, it has been the world's largest gold producer," said David Tait, CEO of the WGC.

Tait said China's incredible achievements highlight the country's crucial role and influence in shaping the future of the global gold industry. China has an influence that, in his opinion, should extend beyond its borders.

"Especially in key areas such as gold bar integrity, digitalization ... and by bringing your own views to responsible supply chains and artisanal mining, issues of responsibility involve all of us here today," Tait said.

The remarkable progress of the Chinese gold market mirrors this rapid development and should act as an example to the rest of the world that anything is possible "as we pursue our own gold reforms", he said.

Tait further said the 2024 mid-year outlook report showed that gold has had an exceptional year so



An employee shows gold ornaments at a jewelry firm's display hall in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. NI LIFANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

far, with the price in US dollar terms rising by 12 percent during the first half.

"This impressive growth has outpaced most other asset classes, driven by sustained central bank purchases, robust consumer demand in Asia, ever burgeoning global debt, fear of currency debasement and the obvious ongoing geopolitical uncertainties."

These uncertainties continue to highlight gold's role as a safe-haven asset as well as have an impact on the global gold market.

Backed by rising demand for over-the-counter transactions, persistent central bank buying and slowing outflows of gold-backed exchange-traded funds, gold prices were driven to a record quarterly average of \$2,338 per ounce in the second quarter, up 18 percent year-on-year.

Following the global price rise, the domestic gold market showed a divergent performance in consumption and investment.

In the second quarter, demand for jewelry in China hit the lowest same-time level since 2009, with a quarterly demand for a mere 86 metric tons, and Chinese jewelry

consumption fell 18 percent year-on-year to 270 tons in the first half, according to the WGC.

The withering demand contrasted with demand for investment in the Chinese market, as bar and coin investment demand surged 62 percent year-on-year to 80 tons in the second quarter — the strongest second-quarter performance since 2013. Total investment requirements in the first half surged 65 percent year-on-year to 190 tons, WGC data showed.

As the gold rally is expected to continue, Tait said he believes the dip in jewelry will not last too long, and investment in gold bars and coins will stay because he sees big potential in gold investment, including bars and coins as well as gold ETFs.

Several factors have boosted the gold market sentiment, including the constant new price highs, concerns about geopolitics, rising expectations for interest rate cuts in major economies and central banks' constant buying, said Zhou Maohua, an analyst with China Everbright Bank, in an interview with China Business Journal.

EU action will hurt trade partnership

By ZHONG NAN
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Protectionist moves by the European Union, particularly those targeting Chinese electric vehicles, will affect mutual trust and cooperation between China and the EU, market watchers and industry leaders said.

Chinese firms may perceive such measures as discriminatory and this could undermine their confidence in the EU market. The erosion of trust can lead to a more challenging business environment, potentially deterring Chinese investments and reducing bilateral trade, they said.

The European Commission last week announced plans to impose import tariffs of up to 36.3 percent on EVs produced in China, while it proposed to charge Tesla an additional tariff of only 9 percent on its vehicles imported from China.

These measures, if implemented, would remain in effect for five years, though a final decision has yet to be made.

"The EU's protectionist actions will damage China-EU economic and trade cooperation, disrupting ongoing consultations and negotiations between the two sides and setting a concerning precedent for addressing similar issues in the future," said Cui Fan, a professor specializing in international trade at the Beijing-based University of International Business and Economics.

Hu Zinan, a researcher at the German Studies Center of Tongji University in Shanghai, said the negative effect could also ripple through the industry chain, affecting the economies of multiple EU countries and further weakening their overall economic performance.

"For example, Germany is already experiencing a technical recession. The pressure of economic stagnation makes Germany more cautious about any policies and measures that could trigger trade disputes," Hu said. "They certainly could hinder its economic recovery."

In addition to launching an anti-subsidy probe into certain dairy products imported from the EU last week, China's Ministry of Commerce held a meeting on Friday to gather opinions and suggestions from industry professionals and experts on raising import tariffs on large-displacement fuel vehicles.

The meeting, presided over by the ministry's head of the Department of Finance, was attended by representatives from industry organizations, research institutions and automotive companies.

Shi Yonghong, vice-president of the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, said that under the new Foreign Subsidies Regulation, the EU is able to conduct in-depth investigations into local investments in industries that it suspects of receiving foreign subsidies.

These investigations can be followed by a range of measures, including forbidding investments or divesting assets. Such measures are more stringent and involve a wider scope compared to merely imposing tariffs, causing considerable concern to companies, said Shi.

Therefore, Chinese EV manufacturers are likely to adopt a wait-and-see attitude toward investments in Europe, as they are unable to determine the severe impact of the new EU rules at the moment, and such uncertainty means significant risk, he added.

Even though establishing production bases in non-EU countries like Thailand and Türkiye may help bypass high tariffs and reduce dependence on the EU market, Chinese auto manufacturers should not rush into localizing production solely in response to tariff increases, said Bai Ming, a member of the Academic Degree Committee at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

It is crucial to conduct a thorough assessment for interests rate cuts, ensuring there is adequate demand, a favorable business environment and opportunities to extend China's related industry chains internationally, said Bai.

LIFE



Employees work at Doctors Energy's battery production line in Tianjin. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tianjin battery tech firm eyes ASSBs by '26

Doctors Energy to mass produce its quasi-solid-state products from Oct

By CHENG YU
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Chinese solid-state battery technology company Doctors (Tianjin) Energy Technology Inc plans to start all-solid-state battery (ASSB) production by 2026, after it starts operating a 1 gigawatt-hour quasi-solid-state battery production line.

Pan Qinghai, founder of Doctors, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily that the company is expected to mass produce its frontier quasi-solid-state batteries in October, and is likely to become the first domestic firm to achieve GWh-scale output for this advanced battery technology.

The Baodi, Tianjin-based company is also constructing a new 10 GWh solid-state lithium-ion battery facility with a total investment of 5 billion yuan (\$700 million). The new project is expected to begin with a 5 GWh mass production line in late 2025 and with full production of ASSBs by 2027.

Solid-state batteries offer higher theoretical energy density and safety, and entail lower costs than lithium-ion batteries that currently dominate the electric vehicle sector. Many countries consider them, especially ASSBs, a potentially game-changing technology.

The industry categorizes batteries based on the proportion of liquid electrolytes they contain, ranging from liquid (25 percent) and semisolid (5-10 percent) to quasi-solid (0-5 percent) and all solid (0 percent).

"Given the current immature

upstream supply chain for solid electrolytes and dry electrode technologies, the company now mainly focuses on quasi-solid-state batteries. But efforts on such batteries will become a strategic steppingstone toward all-solid-state technology," he said.

According to Pan, Doctors boasts several proprietary technologies in quasi-solid-state batteries, especially pioneering an in-body and out-body dual polymerization technology, which successfully addresses the notorious interface problems plaguing solid-state lithium batteries.

Its use of a unique polymer-inorganic salt composite electrolyte has also solved conductivity issues at both room and low temperatures.

Today, countries around the world are accelerating the development of solid-state batteries, and trying to gain a foothold in this niche sector. Japan, which has been striving to develop ASSBs since 2018, currently has the highest number of related patent applications.

As China steps up its efforts to develop solid-state batteries amid intensified competition, many Chinese companies have already gained some momentum in commercializing the technology, including reducing the cost.

Pan said that Doctors' prototypes of ASSBs are priced "comparably to", if not lower than, quasi-solid batteries.

Bolstered by a team of multidisciplinary experts from the United States, Japan, and China, as well as a robust management and marketing framework, Pan said that the

company is "pretty confident" in achieving its goals.

Baodi district, home to Doctors' headquarters, is rapidly positioning itself as a hub for battery innovation. With support from the local economic development zone, the company has made significant strides in integrating into the regional battery supply chain.

Li Shuang, general manager of Tianjin Baodi Economic and Technological Development Zone Investment Development Group Co Ltd, said: "Doctors is a critical component of our battery industry cluster. Their advancements have elevated the competitiveness of Baodi's energy sector as a whole."

Notably, the company is further bolstered by financing from Tianjin SME Credit Financing Guarantee Co Ltd, the largest State-owned credit financing guarantee company in Tianjin, with its project "Jin Zhong Zi" exclusively offering high-tech small and medium-sized enterprises substantial credit guarantees in financing.

Yang Dongxiang, the guarantee company's chairman of the board, said that Doctors, as an SME in the research and development and manufacturing of solid-state lithium batteries, is fully aligned with national strategies and industrial policies.

Its solid-state battery technology is globally advanced and is widely acknowledged as the next-generation solution for solid-state battery energy, Yang said.

"We hope that by providing guarantees and introducing initial loans to the company, we can attract more banks, funds and venture capital institutions, allowing the company to secure both equity and debt financing," he added.

Trade-in policy stimulating consumption

BELJING — In a significant push to stimulate consumer spending, China has rolled out an expansive trade-in policy across multiple sectors.

From automobiles and home appliances to real estate, the initiative aims to encourage the replacement of outdated goods with newer and more advanced options.

Experts believe that trade-in programs for consumer goods are more than just product replacement, and represent upgrades as well as quality improvements. Such programs not only bring higher-quality products, but also stimulate consumer demand, energizing domestic consumption and reinforcing economic recovery. For businesses and industries, this presents a significant opportunity for growth.

Automobiles

Wu Qiang of Jiangsu province recently received a 20,000 yuan (\$2,803) subsidy to trade in his 16-year-old fuel vehicle for an electric vehicle.

Initially, he considered selling his old car to a dealership for just 4,000 yuan. While he was weighing his options, China issued a new circular that increased financial incentives to encourage consumers to scrap their old vehicles to buy new ones.

According to the circular, subsi-

dies for trade-ins of new-energy passenger vehicles have doubled from 10,000 yuan — a figure stipulated in an April document — to 20,000 yuan. Subsidies for trade-ins of fuel passenger vehicles have also risen from 7,000 yuan to 15,000 yuan.

Encouraged by the latest policy, Wu quickly decided to scrap his old car and purchased a new Mercedes-Benz Smart EV, then applied for the subsidy.

Dealerships are also seeing the opportunities. For instance, Jiang, a car salesperson working at a shopping mall in Beijing's Chaoyang district, said that many customers are now upgrading their vehicles, with the trade-in program offering significant financial incentives.

Automakers like FAW-Volkswagen and BAIC are also participating, offering up to 60,000 yuan in trade-in subsidies.

Home appliances

In the home appliance sector, the trade-in program has also been well-received.

Zhang Haibo, a sales supervisor at Suning, a major home-appliance retailer in China, said many customers are attracted by the trade-in program, combined with government subsidies, store discounts and brand promotions.

Suning's data reveal that nearly

40 percent of its consumers have chosen to purchase new home appliances through trade-in programs this year, including air conditioners, washing machines and large-screen TVs.

Wu Sa from the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research pointed out that China, with its large population, has a vast market for durable goods, representing significant potential for the replacement market. The expected market space for replacing old automobiles and home appliances is expected to exceed 1 trillion yuan.

Housing

The housing sector has also embraced trade-ins, with over 100 cities encouraging homeowners to swap old properties for new ones with an additional payment. This scheme has been taken a step further in the Yangtze River Delta region, where intercity housing trade-ins are now available for the first time.

Under this new scheme, homeowners can trade in pre-owned residential properties, not just within Wuxi, Jiangsu, but also in the neighboring cities of Suzhou and Changzhou in the same province, for new homes in Liangxi district of Wuxi.

XINHUA

Farmers, biz in Zhejiang get power boost

By ZHUANG QIANG and PANG BO

In the prefecture-level city of Quzhou in East China's Zhejiang province, Weng Jianhong has no worries while raising bass in his home village of Fenghuangshan.

Earlier, Weng's family planned to establish a fish farm in the village at Hangbu town under Kecheng district, but it needed new power lines to meet electricity demand.

After getting to know Weng's situation, Lin Qigang, an employee of State Grid Quzhou Power Supply Co, assigned his colleagues to conduct an on-site survey, designing a new transformer layout plan for the village.

They set up more than 20 new utility poles, with three-phase power supply wiring, and erected a 400 kilovolt-ampere transformer to meet villagers' electricity needs.

"With the new transformer, our cultivation of bass is now fully guaranteed," said Weng, adding that he has signed some contracts with buyers in the prefecture-level city of Jiaxing in Zhejiang and received some advance payments from them.

"I also intend to open an on-site fish farm experience restaurant next year, allowing visitors a one-stop homestay," he said.

In the neighboring county-level city of Jiangshan under Quzhou, Lai Xueyun had a similar story while first opening her "Yunqi Camping" homestay.

Back in 2021, Lai took a fancy to

the green mountains and hills of Xiaotangyuan, and decided to give up her business in the city before opening a high-end homestay by redecorating five idle adobe houses atop a lush mountain.

When Zheng Jian, a power supply employee from the Qingyang Power Supply Office under State Grid Quzhou unit, learned of the news, he immediately reached out to Lai, as he also hails from her village.

He advised Lai on her investment in the bed and breakfast, site selection and power access, as a homestay needs sufficient power supply.

"Three years earlier, Xiaotangyuan was a largely underutilized area and almost became a deserted 'barren mountain,' as local villagers moved out to pursue better lives amid the region's poverty-alleviation campaign," Lai said.

"It's not easy to run a high-end homestay in this almost 'isolated' mountain," she said, citing the initial power distribution shortfalls as one early impediment.

Although the homestay could be redecorated as "old as before", its modern facilities such as all-electric kitchens, air-conditioning, floor heating, warm water circulation and landscape lighting are now musts for discriminating tenants, resulting in growing electricity demand.

Preliminary calculations showed that total capacity of the homestay could reach more than 150 kilowatts, while the transformer in Neitangyuan only had a capacity of 100 kV-A, so it was imperative to

install a new transformer, Lai said.

Qingyang Power Supply Station coordinated with the local government to aid the power renovation project, and applied for a 1.1 million yuan (\$155,000) support to transform the power line, which extends for some 3.24 kilometers, Zheng said.

They also opened a green channel to reduce the construction timeframe, thus shortening the construction period from one year to just two months, he added.

Zheng and his team leader He Xiabing had played a key role in monitoring local power supply services, checking power equipment, conducting infrared temperature measurements, as well as supervising load monitoring.

Now, driving their yellow electric vehicle along winding roads in the mountains dotted with verdant trees and bubbling brooks, Zheng said their efforts have paid off, as the "deserted" mountain has once again become a cool "paradise".

He said that all their tasks followed work arrangements made by Qingyang Power Supply Station, which has required each staff member to keep a "work diary" since 2013 to keep track of residents' power requirements.

Lai said her homestay has now become an online sensation, thanks to its lush mountain setting and rejuvenating natural environment.

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LIFEFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Chinese funds help energize Global South

Products, services, tech ... all make big difference to BRI, RCEP economies

By ZHONG NAN
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What could be the next growth opportunity for Chinese companies? For many, the answer is operating overseas.

There was a time when Chinese companies operating overseas focused on building roads, ports and bridges. This was followed by forays into textiles, cement, food processing and power generation.

Today, Chinese firms, especially those engaged in sectors like high-end manufacturing and trade-in services, are adapting their strategies to better align with the changing global market environment.

For instance, Chinese automaker BYD will invest around \$1 billion to build a plant in Turkey, according to information released by the Turkish Ministry of Industry and Technology in early July.

With an annual capacity of 150,000 vehicles as well as armed with a research and development center, the factory will be operational in late 2026. It will create as many as 5,000 jobs in Turkey, which is in a Customs union with the European Union. This allows vehicles to be exported to the bloc without tariffs.

JinkoSolar Holding Co Ltd, a Chinese solar panel producer with 14 production bases across the world, also announced in mid-July that it will form a joint venture in Saudi Arabia with local partners.

The joint venture will build and operate a high-efficiency solar cell and solar module factory in the kingdom. The manufacturing facility is expected to have a total investment amount of \$1 billion.

"This move will further help us optimize our global manufacturing and marketing infrastructure, as well as enhance our competitiveness," said Li Xiande, JinkoSolar's chairman and CEO.

Over the past five years, with the global landscape evolving rapidly, Chinese businesses' pace of going global has notably accelerated, especially for private companies, said Edward Au, southern region managing partner at Deloitte China.

Owing to their superior technological advantages, strong brand equity and high cost barriers, a large number of Chinese companies have expanded internationally, according to a white paper recently released by Deloitte China

and several partners.

Similar views were shared by Ye Dingda, chief economist of the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation. "Facing fierce competition from their foreign and domestic rivals within China, many Chinese companies' focus on international expansion is becoming a common theme as they seek to tap new opportunities and diversify their revenue streams outside China," said Ye.

By leveraging their competitive advantages and exploring untapped markets, Chinese firms are positioning themselves as key players on the global stage, driving growth through strategic investments and partnerships abroad, he said.

China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment soared 16.6 percent year-on-year to \$72.62 billion in the first half of 2024, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed. Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative framework gained steam as Chinese ODI in countries and regions participating in the BRI surged 9.2 percent year-on-year to \$15.46 billion.

Amid rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions, more Chinese companies have been keen to allocate more resources and manpower to develop markets involved in the BRI. For them, the BRI landscape represents new growth points that can mitigate operational risks and ensure long-term growth, said Liang Ming, director of the Institute of International Trade, which is part of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

KTK Group Co, a manufacturer of industrial equipment and electronic products based in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, has further expanded its sales and service networks in regions such as Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, while its business operations in the United States market have been restricted by the US Department of Commerce since 2020.

Gao Feng, the company's vice-president, said KTK Group has received orders worth over 100 million yuan (\$13.97 million) in these regions in recent years.

The group's overseas business focuses primarily on supplying components for high-speed trains, intercity trains and subway carriages. These mainly include equipment, electrical control systems and integrated modular interior decorations. Its overseas market business



Above: An employee works on an assembly line of electric buses, whose components are imported from China, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in March.

XINHUA
Left: Workers operate BYD's battery production line in Manaus, Brazil, in March.

WANG TIANCONG / XINHUA



currently accounts for about 40 percent of its total revenue.

"Markets participating in the BRI have become a new growth driver for our overseas business operations, particularly for our interior systems and seats designed for various types of trains," Gao said.

China's exports of mechanical and electrical products, including automobiles, smartphones, automatic data processing equipment and integrated circuits, reached 7.14 trillion yuan in the first half of this year, surging 8.2 percent year-on-year, accounting for 58.9 percent of the total value of the country's exports, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Kang Ren, vice-president of Naipu Mining Machinery Co Ltd, a Shangrao, Jiangxi province-based mining equipment manufacturer, said this highlights China's continuous efforts in scientific and technological innovation, industrial upgrades and brand development in international markets.

Thanks to cooperation under the BRI and the company's continuous market expansion in emerging markets, including Serbia, Kazakhstan, Peru and Indonesia, Naipu Mining Machinery's overseas revenue surpassed domestic revenue for the first time in the first half.

"At present, we have 600 million yuan worth of orders lined up for production, with schedules extending into 2025. Our workshops are operating daily to meet these deadlines," said Kang, adding the company has established factories in Africa and South America, further cutting production costs and reaching more clients.

Naipu Mining Machinery's exports reached 320 million yuan during the January-June period, up 200 percent year-on-year, the highest growth in recent years.

According to the "Resolution of the (20th) Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Compre-

hensively to Advance Chinese Modernization", which was released in late July, China will further deepen reform, including in the trade sector, and continue to expand its opening-up policy.

China will "steadily expand opening-up, deepen foreign trade structural reform, further reform the management systems for inward and outward investment, improve planning for regional opening-up, and refine the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative", said the resolution.

Denis Depoux, global managing director at management consultancy Roland Berger, said that maintaining growth needs new drivers and new models. Technology and innovation are at the heart of China's transformation.

Such an effort is also associated with inventing a new model for overseas investments. It is not only an export-driven model, but a model that is driven by Chinese investments overseas to produce and sell

those value-added products, said Depoux.

"We have seen this pattern with China's surging ODI in greenfield project numbers and value in 2023 through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the BRI.

"A large share of these investments flowed into developing countries, creating inclusiveness for opportunities and growth."

Echoing that sentiment, Li Xingqian, director-general of the department of foreign trade at the Ministry of Commerce, said innovation will significantly enhance the confidence of Chinese companies, and China's high-quality development will allow global trade partners to benefit from the opportunities presented by its huge market.

Latest data confirm that trend. China's exports of high-tech products rose 6 percent year-on-year in 2023, accounting for 18.7 percent of its total export value. Additionally, exports of domestic brands grew 9.3 percent last year, making up 21 percent of overall exports, according to Customs data.

The global upward cycle in technology and green transformation will continue to benefit the exporters of China's semiconductors, mechanical and electrical products, vessels and electric vehicles, fostering structural growth potential for Chinese products in the coming months, said Wang Xiaosong, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of Economics in Beijing.

High green quotient marks B&R project in Peru

By ZHONG NAN

European beech can grow nicely at an altitude of 500 meters where light and warmth can aid it to thrive. Eucalyptus cannot be planted above 1,500 meters as it is not cold-resistant. Above 3,000 meters, cedar trees can endure the cold winter, maintaining a growth rate of 30 centimeters per year.

What have these arboreal details got to do with the Belt and Road Initiative? Plenty, said Wang Hantao, head of the forestry management unit for the Andes National Road project in Peru. His understanding of these trees is thorough.

While building infrastructure such as roads, bridges and railways to improve the lives of people in countries and regions participating in the BRI, Wang's employer, State-owned China Railway 20th Bureau Group Corp, is paying careful attention to protecting the local environment.

CR20G, a subsidiary of Beijing-based China Railway Construction

Corp Ltd, and its domestic partners are responsible for building the Andes National Road project, also known as the Carretera Huanuco-La Union-Huallanca road project. The road crosses the Andes Mountains with a total length of 236.63 kilometers. About 90 percent of the sections have an elevation of over 3,000 meters.

"August is the driest season in Peru. The saplings planted at the spoil ground are in a critical maintenance period, so we need to irrigate them every day. When the rainfall is sufficient next year, we will only need to water them once every three or four days," said Wang.

The native forests along the highway are non-renewable resources of the Andes Mountains. To protect these trees, Wang and his team have to mark the trees within the red line area before construction begins and use advanced tree transplantation techniques to relocate them.

Once construction is completed, the trees are transplanted back to their original locations, said Wang.

Located in central and western regions of Peru, it is the country's largest infrastructure project under construction. The contract is valued at \$375 million, according to information released by China Railway Construction Corp (International) Ltd, another subsidiary of CRCC.

Construction works began in 2019, and the entire project is expected to take 11-12 years to complete.

After the completion of this main passage from the Andes Mountains to other areas within Peru, it will be connected to the Pan-American Highway, a network of roads stretching across the Americas, measuring about 30,000 km in total length.

As a key infrastructure project to promote local socioeconomic development and improve people's livelihoods, it will benefit more than 270,000 people in 243 towns along the road, greatly improving local transportation conditions, said the Xi'an, Shaanxi province-based CR20G.

Wan Zhe, a researcher at the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University, said that with the Chinese government prioritizing environmental protection as a key principle of Belt and Road collaboration, more Chinese companies are focusing on environmental preservation and conservation as they undertake construction projects in participating countries and regions.

"Over the years, Chinese companies have become more familiar with the laws, regulations and cultures of various countries. They understand that improving their environmental, social and governance performance can enhance their business operations," said Wan.

Many Chinese companies have also developed greater capacity to engage with local communities and non-governmental organizations, she said.

Sharing similar views, Zhou Lisha, a researcher at the Institute for State-owned Enterprises, which is part of Tsinghua University in Beijing, said



A worker from State-owned China Railway 20th Bureau Group Corp waters plants near a section of the Andes National Road project in Peru in late July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

these moves have significantly cut carbon emissions, reducing pollution and protecting biodiversity while providing improved economic opportunities for the countries and regions involved in the BRI.

With more than 17,000 employees, CR20G has built a market presence in more than 20 countries, including Angola, Mozambique,

Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

Apart from the design and construction of transportation infrastructure, CR20G's business scope includes real estate development, manufacturing, logistics and trade, railway transportation, environmental protection, engineering project inspection, design consulting and training.