

**Fostering unity**

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# CHINA DAILY

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## Rate cuts will boost market confidence

Gradual release of policy package set to put economy on 'more favorable growth trajectory'

By WANG KEJU and ZHOU LANXU

China's top financial regulators, in a move that went beyond market expectations, unveiled a potent combination of monetary easing measures on Tuesday, aimed at anchoring market confidence and underpinning economic recovery amid ongoing domestic and global headwinds, analysts said.

The forceful one-two punch, including cutting the reserve requirement ratio, key policy interest rates and existing mortgage loan interest rates, will foster a more enabling climate for the world's second-largest economy to hit this year's growth target, they added.

"Recent macroeconomic data pointing to a tepid recovery in domestic consumption and weak inflationary pressures have created space for policymakers to ramp up efforts to bolster the economy," said Ming Ming, chief economist at CITIC Securities.

"The gradual release of the policy package will help shore up market sentiment, unleash pent-up consumer demand, and drive a pickup in prices, putting the economy on a more favorable growth trajectory," he added.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank, said at a news conference that the reserve requirement ratio — the amount of cash that banks

are required to have on hand — will be reduced by 0.5 percentage point in the near term, which will free up about 1 trillion yuan (\$142.2 billion) for new lending.

This marks the second time that the central bank has lowered the RRR this year, after implementing a 0.5 percentage point reduction in February, indicating that Chinese policymakers are proactively tapping into the policy space provided by the US Federal Reserve's interest rate cut last week, experts said.

Following the latest reduction, the average reserve ratio for the banking sector will drop to around 6.6 percent. This level still leaves considerable flexibility to further lower the RRR if needed, when compared with other major global economies, Pan said.

China's central bank will not shy away from further RRR cuts of 0.25 to 0.5 percentage point this year, depending on the prevailing market liquidity conditions, Pan added.

The central bank also announced a reduction in its seven-day reverse repo rate — the short-term policy benchmark of interest rates — by 0.2 percentage point from the current 1.7 percent to 1.5 percent.

This move is expected to drive down the medium-term lending facility rate by around 0.3 percentage point, with the loan prime rates also projected to follow suit, declining by 0.2 to 0.25 percentage point, Pan added.

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## Fleeing for their lives



The main highway leading out of the southern port city of Sidon in Lebanon is jammed with cars moving toward the capital Beirut on Tuesday as thousands of people made their way to relative safety after Monday's Israeli airstrikes. Lebanon's health ministry said that Israeli strikes had killed 558 people, including 50 children, and wounded 1,835 others. MOHAMMED ZAATARI / AP See more, pages 3, 7, 11

## Sino-ASEAN cooperation hailed at expo, summit

By YANG HAN and SHI RUIPENG in Nanning and MO JINGXI in Beijing

Senior officials from China and member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have lauded China-ASEAN cooperation as an exemplary partnership that has played a key role in promoting regional progress, resilience and shared prosperity.

They made the remarks on Tuesday at the opening ceremony of the 21st China-ASEAN Expo and China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. More than 3,000 companies are attending the expo.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang said that interactions between China and ASEAN have served as the most successful and dynamic model of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, and a vivid example of the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

"China regards ASEAN as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy and a key region in high-quality Belt and Road cooperation," Ding

**In the face of geopolitical tensions and other challenging factors, our collective efforts must focus on regional peace, stability and prosperity."**

Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysian Prime Minister

said. "ASEAN countries, on their part, see in China a trustworthy and close partner."

China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, while ASEAN has been China's biggest trading partner for four years in a row. The cumulative two-way investment between China and ASEAN countries has exceeded \$400 billion, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Ding said that as China's modernization drive brings huge opportunities to the rest of the world, the nation will continue to deepen practical cooperation with ASEAN countries, making efforts to strengthen strategic mutual

trust, elevate openness and cooperation, and promote all-around connectivity.

He also called on the two sides to explore new areas of cooperation in scientific and technological innovation and foster new highlights in people-to-people interactions.

In a video speech delivered at the opening ceremony, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said that China is an important trading partner for Malaysia, and that it is vital for ASEAN and China to diversify trade and investment strategies.

"In the face of geopolitical tensions and other challenging factors, our collective efforts must focus on regional peace, stability and prosperity," Anwar said.

Malaysia is the country of honor at this year's expo.

Vongsey Vissoth, deputy prime minister of Cambodia, said the shared values of peace, cooperation and mutual respect between China and ASEAN form the foundation of their partnership.

Vissoth said he believes that the two sides can achieve more fruitful results through their cooperation in trade and economy, with the China-ASEAN free trade agreement bringing new opportunities.

Noting that 2024 has been desig-

nated as the ASEAN-China Year of People-to-People Exchanges, Kikeo Khaykhamphouthou, deputy prime minister of Laos, the rotating chair of ASEAN this year, said the cooperation between China and ASEAN is not only reflected in trade and investment, but also in culture and tourism.

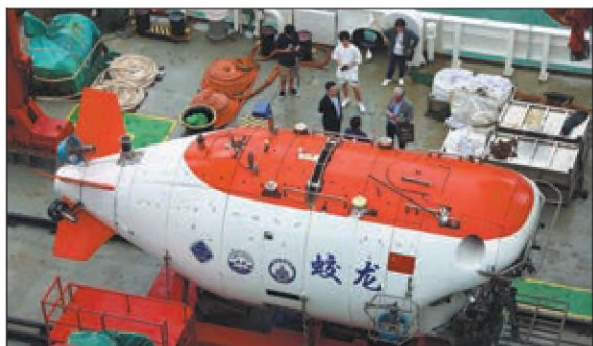
Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Ho Duc Phoc said the expo and the summit also reaffirm China's important role in the global economy and demonstrate the confidence of businesses from various countries in the vast, dynamic and promising Chinese market.

Phoc, who is also Vietnam's minister of finance, proposed four priority areas for future China-ASEAN cooperation — promoting balanced and sustainable trade, enhancing strategic connectivity and expanding regional economic corridor routes, encouraging high-quality investment in emerging sectors, and strengthening cultural and tourism exchanges.

ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn said, "With continued and renewed collaboration, ASEAN and China will forge new pathways for growth and success."

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## Back from the deep



China's manned deep-sea submersible *Jiaolong* is seen on Tuesday on the deck of *Deep Sea No 1* research vessel at a port in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong. The vessel just completed a 45-day expedition to the Western Pacific Ocean. EDMOND TANG / CHINA DAILY

## Free trade between China, EU key to globalized world

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez visited China from Sept 8 to 11. In Beijing, he met with President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji. Sanchez inaugurated the ninth Spain-China Forum and the Spain-China Business Advisory Council during his visit.

According to a Spanish government news release, during Sanchez's meeting with President Xi on Sept 9, Sanchez "stressed that, in matters on which the positions of Spain and China do not fully coincide, Spain will maintain a constructive willingness for dialogue and cooperation, emphasizing the country's commitment to developing a positive agenda and seeking consensual solutions

**WORLD WATCH**  
By Oriol Caudevilla

that benefit all parties, including Europe". Furthermore, eight agreements were signed, reaffirming the two countries' commitment to working together in favor of green development, bilateral trade and investment, initiatives for the promotion of culture, education and scientific research.

While this year marks the 51st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Spain, this is Sanchez's second trip to China in less than two years — the previous one being in March

2023. This is not a random fact. According to data from China's Ministry of Commerce, China is Spain's largest trading partner outside the eurozone.

Data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity shows that in 2022, Chinese exports to Spain were worth \$47 billion. The major goods to be exported were semiconductor devices (\$3.29 billion), broadcasting equipment (\$2.07 billion) and electric batteries (\$1.81 billion). China's exports to Spain have increased at an annualized rate of 12 percent, from \$26.7 billion in 2017 to \$47 billion in 2022. On the other hand, in 2022, Spain exported \$8.51 billion worth of goods to China. The main exports from Spain to China were copper ore (\$1.2 billion), pork (\$1.05 billion) and packaged medicaments (\$620 million). Spanish exports to China increased at an annualized rate of 4.38 percent from \$6.87 billion in 2017 to \$8.51 billion in 2022.

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## YOUNG PEOPLE SWELL DEMAND FOR CREATIVE CULTURAL ITEMS

Museums produce rare, beautiful, fun goods based on relics, art, history

By YANG FEIYUE  
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When art designer Lu Xue decided to transform the inspiration she took from the renowned Tang Dynasty (618-907) painting *Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers* into tangible art curios, they struck a major chord with museum patrons.

Her creations include butterfly-shaped rings, and bracelets and earrings featuring preserved flow-



ers and natural stones of different hues. Since the items hit the market at the beginning of the year, visitors to the Liaoning Provincial Museum in Shenyang have been lining up to buy the items.

During the summer vacation, some of the items from the series, such as a Chinese-style corsage,

were among the top sellers at the museum in the provincial capital.

"When I laid my eyes on the precious ancient painting at the museum, I noticed that women in ancient times wore cut flowers as part of their attire. This inspired me to think about how we could apply fresh flowers to modern girls, allowing them to wear flowers in a different way," said Lu, who used to be a floral artist.

See *Museums*, page 2



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## PAGE TWO

# Museums: Clever creations make culture a reality



**Top and above:** Fridge magnets in the shape of a bronze mask and a warrior on display at Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan, Sichuan province.  
PHOTOS BY DU LIANYI / CHINA DAILY

## From page 1

The classic work by renowned artist Zhou Fang paints a vivid picture of the life of palace women who wore their hair styled into high, cloud-like buns, with fluffy "sideburns". Between the buns are inserted flowers including Chinese peonies, lotuses, and hydrangeas.

The painting is a microcosm of the Tang Dynasty, full of elegance and grandeur, and showcasing an epoch of wealth and splendor, said Dong Baohou, vice-curator of the Liaoning museum.

Lu carefully selected natural pink, blue and green tones and sealed dried flowers in them by using modern technology, giving the flowers an amber texture and a colored glaze.

"This cultural and creative product not only brings cultural relics to life, but also allows more people to learn about China's excellent traditional culture," said Lu who is part of the cultural and creative team assembled by the museum last year.

To date, the team has developed hundreds of items — ranging from bookmarks, costumes, cosmetics and skincare products — which bear elements of cultural pieces at the museum. Last year, sales of those products reached 14 million yuan (\$1.96 million), the museum said.

## New wave emerges

Cultural licensing and cross-industry collaboration have been thriving in recent years, taking the cultural and creative industries into a new era, Dong said.

This new wave of cultural and creative products not only meets fashion demands but also highlights the significance of culture, and aligns well with the consumption preferences of the younger generation, Dong added.

Elsewhere in the city, the Shenyang Palace Museum — where the imperial complex of three emperors of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was located — has launched ice creams, cakes and refrigerator magnets featuring historical architecture or cultural items. The goods have been in great demand.

At the Shenyang Museum, visitors have snapped up mugs bearing dragon motifs, scarves with floral patterns of Liao Dynasty (916-1125) vases, and refrigerator magnets shaped like the museum's dome.

Cultural and creative items sold by

museums across the province raked in 69.68 million yuan in the first six months of this year, up 206.5 percent over the same period last year, local government data showed.

"Nowadays, many people are willing to visit museums, especially parents who are eager to take their children to museums to enrich their knowledge and broaden their horizons," said An Yiwen, who runs cultural tours in Shenyang.

"They also hope to bring home some unique items from the museums. From this perspective, there is still a lot of market potential for cultural and creative products," An said.

Museum bookings made via Meituan for the first two weeks of July — the start of the summer vacation — were 15 times the amount for the same period in June, the e-commerce platform said. Over the same comparison period, the number of users on the review app Dazhong Dianping discussing museums more than doubled.

China is home to more than 6,800 registered museums, which attract 1.29 billion visits a year, according to the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

## By popular demand

Some cultural and creative products, however, have proved more popular with cultural travelers.

In 2023, the National Library of China in Beijing launched a pillow shaped like its collection of *Yongle Dadian*, the world's first encyclopedia, which was completed in 1408 after being commissioned in 1403 by Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

Since then, the pillow has recorded brisk sales, with some buyers even posting comments saying it had helped cure their insomnia.

In 2019, the national library launched over 1,500 cultural and creative products themed around ancient books, which have brought in over 60 million yuan in total revenue.

The Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau said several museums under its jurisdiction, including the Capital Museum and the Grand Canal Museum of Beijing, have established cultural and creative spaces.

The revenue from cultural and creative products sold in museums across Beijing exceeded 200 million yuan in 2023, according to local authorities.

The recent 2024 Cultural and Creative Industry Report released by the Shanghai-based Mob research institute showed that 95.5 percent of consumers surveyed are willing to purchase such products.

The two main reasons consumers buy cultural and creative products are to display them in collections or for daily use, the report said. Buyers pay close attention to the design, price and variety of these products, it added.

E-commerce platforms have surpassed traditional brick-and-mortar stores to become the main way the products are purchased.

Video platforms like Bilibili, Douyin, and Kuaishou are popular sources for consumers to obtain information about the products, and genuine customer reviews help buyers make quicker purchasing decisions, the report said.

The ongoing Civilization of Ancient Egypt exhibition at the Shanghai Museum, for instance, has created a buying spree. At the museum's flagship store on Alibaba's Tmall, Egyptian cat keychains, tote bags bearing the exhibition logos, and mummy pendants are in high demand.

Many of these products have experienced supply shortages since the exhibition started on July 19. The online store offers more than 200 cultural products related to the exhibition and some have had to be restocked on a daily basis since August, according to store staff.

The Gansu Provincial Museum struck gold in July when it rolled out fluffy toys in the shape of broccoli, mushrooms, crab sticks, meatballs, and rice cakes to celebrate *malatang*, a spicy hot pot considered a local specialty.

In the first week of August, the museum said its Tmall store saw a 343 percent year-on-year increase in product sales.

## Young buyers

Young consumers born in the 1990s and 2000s are becoming a driving force behind the consumption of museum-themed cultural and creative products, data from the online travel platform Mafengwo showed.

They have grown up with the internet and desire items that are "individual" and



**Top:** Visitors browse for souvenirs at the art and life gallery in the Gansu Provincial Museum in Lanzhou, Gansu province in May last year. QU JUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY **Above left:** Ice creams replicating bronze masks at the Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan, Sichuan province, are displayed. YI FANG / FOR CHINA DAILY **Above right:** Customers view the cultural creative products at the souvenir shop of the Henan Provincial Museum in Zhengzhou, Henan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

provide them with a special experience or knowledge. This demand has driven the continuous upgrade of such products, the platform said.

As a result, cultural and creative products have evolved from simple items like postcards and badges depicting museums. They now include creatively designed relic refrigerator magnets, and archaeology blind boxes, which have an element of surprise and mystery for buyers.

These cultural and creative products are now a main attraction for young people visiting museums, according to the Mafengwo report.

The fusion of museum culture and creativity not only promotes a diverse range of products, but also shows the immense market potential for related industries, experts said.

The market size of China's cultural and creative products reached \$16.38 billion in 2023, an increase of 13.09 percent year-on-year, according to an industry report by the Beijing-based consultancy, the Intelligence Research Group.

There are currently about 35,300 cultural and creative-related companies in the country, data from business registrations tracker Qichacha showed. In 2023, there were 336 new registrations, representing a year-on-year growth of nearly 10 percent.

A relatively complete industry chain for cultural and creative products has already taken shape in China, the Mob research report said. This chain is extensive, covering various related industries from creative design to product manufacturing, sales, and consumption, it pointed out.

In 2021, Chinese authorities rolled out a set of measures to encourage the development of creative cultural products inspired by museums, libraries, memorial halls, and other cultural sites.

Such products should help people better understand and boost confidence in Chinese culture, according to a document jointly issued by eight departments including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

## Incentives rolled out

Preferential tax and income incentives have also been offered to boost the production and promotion of these products.

Cultural heritage organizations have been encouraged by authorities to invest in and establish creative product companies. Private investors have also been motivated to take part in developing creative products.

In July, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security officially recognized cultural and creative product planning and operations specialists as new professions. This recognition

will be an important factor in driving the development of the cultural industry, experts said.

Liu Ziqi, co-founder of the cultural and creative product brand DuckSong in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, said such products have greater cultural and sentimental value for consumers. "They're what players in the industry should focus on," Liu said.

In June, DuckSong came up with fluffy cute "mittens" that allow visitors to understand the process of making *roujiamo*, a crispy, oven-baked bun filled with diced pork that is a Shaanxi specialty.

After one of the buns is made, it is handed to the customer inside the mitten, which immediately becomes a popular item with customers. To date, more than 10,000 orders have been placed for the mitten.

Liu attributes the success of the product to the combination of cultural charm, traditional cuisine, and it also having elements of fun and fashion.

He is confident similar creative products will emerge in the future. "It will be all the more promising. As consumer preferences evolve and are upgraded, the demand for high-quality cultural and creative products will continue to grow," he said.

Wu Liyun, a professor at the China Academy of Culture and Tourism at Beijing International Studies University, said the popularity of

such products is based on the public's growing interest in traditional culture.

Many products with innovative designs and unique shapes align with young people's tastes. They can also serve as a bridge for the public to learn about the culture of a specific historical period, and thus expand cultural influence.

Wu said the development of such products should focus on unique cultural elements, and added that homogenization of these products should be avoided.

A soft toy cultural product of Gansu Provincial Museum in Lanzhou. It is inspired by the museum's iconic bronze sculpture, "Galloping Horse Treading on a Flying Swallow". PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# TOP NEWS

## Sino-US youth exchanges encouraged

By ZHAO JIA  
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Peng Liyuan, the wife of President Xi Jinping, expressed the hope that young people from the US state of Washington could convey the friendly sentiments of the Chinese people and contribute to friendship between the two peoples.

She made the remarks when attending a China-US youth cultural and sports exchange event held at Beijing No 8 High School on Tuesday.

Over 100 teachers and students from more than 10 high schools in Washington state had been invited as part of the initiative announced by President Xi in San Francisco last year to invite 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study programs in the next five years.

Peng warmly welcomed the teach-

ers and students to visit and experience the real China firsthand, and expressed the hope for more mutual understanding and interaction between young people from the two countries to inject positive energy into the bilateral relations.

Peng, together with the guests, watched a friendly basketball match between Chinese and US youths, and she presented commemorative medals to players from both teams. She also had photos taken with students from both countries.

Noting that the visit has helped forge a deep friendship between young people of the two countries, she expressed the belief that the visit would leave a beautiful memory in their hearts.

As the future of China-US relations lies in the youth, Peng said she hoped that members of the delegation would share their experiences in China with their families,

friends and classmates upon returning home, and keep the tree of friendship between the two peoples blossoming.

In 2015, Xi and Peng visited Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Washington. Inside the school auditorium, they enjoyed a choir performance by Chinese and American students.

Logic Seven Allah-Amen, assistant principal at Lincoln High School, fondly recalled on Tuesday hosting the visit in 2015, and sincerely thanked President Xi for his care and support for youth exchanges. He also expressed willingness to actively contribute to promoting mutual understanding between China and the US.

The American student representatives at the event shared their unforgettable experiences and feelings during the China visit, which has also taken them to Guizhou, Shandong and Sichuan provinces.



Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping, attends a Sino-American friendship event in Beijing on Tuesday. Peng had a cordial interaction with the youth delegation from the state of Washington, the United States, during the event, which aims to enhance cultural and sports exchanges between young people from China and the US. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## China's FM: 'Politicizing' trade issues not helpful to any party

By MINLU ZHANG  
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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with his German counterpart in New York on Tuesday and said that politicizing trade disputes with China is not in anyone's interest and hinders the world's "green transformation".

Wang met with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, which opened on Tuesday.

"Politicizing economic and trade issues and imposing excessive tariffs are not in the interest of any party and do not contribute to the world's green transformation," said Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

The meeting came as the European Commission plans to impose tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs), on top of the European Union's standard 10 percent car-import duty.

A vote by the 27 EU member states on the proposed final duties was scheduled for Wednesday but some news reports have suggested it could be delayed.

"We hope that Germany and the EU will adhere to open cooperation, dialogue and coordination; properly handle relevant issues, and jointly uphold international trade rules and a fair, competitive environment," said Wang.

"The half-century journey of China-EU relations fully demonstrates that strengthening China-EU cooperation serves the interests of both parties and contributes to global stability," he said.

The foundation of those relations lies in "mutually beneficial cooperation, as the two economies

are highly complementary and can achieve synergy where one plus one is greater than two", he added.

On China-Germany relations, Wang said the two countries' economic and trade cooperation has stayed at a high level, an indication of the mutually beneficial and strategic nature of the bilateral ties.

Many German companies have taken the opportunities presented by China's pursuit of modernization, Wang said.

The cultivation of the Chinese market by German companies has led to a record high in Germany's investment in the first half of the year, he said.

That investment in China hit a record 7.3 billion euros (\$8.2 billion) in the first half of 2024, according to data from the Central Bank of Germany.

As the world's second- and third-largest economies, "China and Germany can benefit from each other's development, jointly contribute to world peace and prosperity and instill stability to the world," Wang said.

Baerbock said that China is Germany's most important trade partner, and there is a wide range of sectors for bilateral cooperation that will yield mutually beneficial and win-win outcomes.

While adhering to the one-China policy, Germany also believes in upholding free trade and fair competition, and that issues should be resolved through open and transparent dialogue and consultation in order to maintain international trade rules and order, Baerbock said.

As the world's largest single market, the EU should strive to keep its market open, she said.

Germany places great importance on China's significant role in international affairs and is willing to strengthen coordination with China in multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations while actively promoting the development of EU-China relations, Baerbock added.

China has consistently supported the United Nations in playing a central and leading role in international affairs and is willing to strengthen coordination with all parties, including Germany, to ensure that the UN and the Security Council effectively fulfill their responsibility to maintain peace and security.

The two sides also exchanged views on the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

## At UN, call to end Mideast war

Leaders at opening of General Assembly in NY accuse Israel of 'genocide' in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS — Leaders addressing the General Debate of the 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Tuesday called for cessation of the violence that has ravaged the Middle East for months, and some of them directly pointed fingers at Israel, saying it committed "genocide" against the Palestinians.

UNGA President Philemon Yang noted the various conflicts from the Middle East to Ukraine, and from Haiti to South Sudan.

"I call for an immediate cease-fire in all these conflict settings," he said, adding that the people of Gaza and Israel "have been caught in a spiraling cycle of conflict and retribution".

"I take this opportunity to call for an immediate cease-fire for the Hamas-Israel war, the unconditional release of hostages and for all parties to abide by international law, including international humanitarian law, and work towards a just and lasting solution grounded in the United Nations Charter, relevant resolutions and international law, ensuring dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis," he said.

Delivering his 2024 report on the

UN's work ahead of the General Debate, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that world leaders are gathering in the shadow of raging conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere, and rising uncertainty over climate change, poverty and reining in artificial intelligence.

"Our world is in a whirlwind. We are in an era of epic transformation — facing challenges unlike any we have ever seen — challenges that demand global solutions," the UN chief said.

He warned that geopolitical divisions are deepening, temperatures around the world are rising, wars are raging, without any end in sight, and nuclear posturing and new weapons are "casting a dark shadow".

"We are edging towards the unimaginable — a powder keg that risks engulfing the world," he noted.

In his meeting with Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib on Monday, China's top diplomat, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, said: "We pay close attention to developments in the region, especially the recent explosion of communications equipment in Lebanon and firmly oppose indiscriminate attacks against civilians."

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said his nation has benefited from international solidarity in the battle to end apartheid and usher in a new democratic era.

"We will not remain silent and watch as apartheid is perpetrated against others" in Gaza as Israel continues its collective punishment of the Palestinians, he added.

He called for an effort through the UN system and other multinational institutions to end civilian suffering and for South Africa's legal action taken against Israel through the International Court of Justice to prevail.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey condemned Israel for "disregarding basic human rights, trampling on international law at every opportunity, practicing ethnic cleansing, a clear genocide against a nation and a people, and occupying their lands step by step".

He underscored the imperative for the international community to develop a protection mechanism for Palestinian civilians, reiterating that "we have no animosity or hostility towards the people of Israel. We oppose antisemitism in the same way we oppose the targeting of Muslims just because of their faith."

King Abdullah II of Jordan told the General Debate that "now is the time

to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people. It is the moral duty of the international community to establish a protection mechanism for them across the occupied territories."

"Impunity gathers force. Left unchecked, it gains momentum," he said, noting that the world is watching Gaza, "and history will watch us by the courage we show".

The Jordanian leader said that nearly a year into the war, the world has failed politically, "but our humanity must not fail the people of Gaza any longer".

Both leaders said that the world body has not met its obligations in regard to containing the violence.

In his first address to the General Assembly, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called Israel out on its operations in Gaza and Lebanon. "Israel's state terrorism in Lebanon cannot go unanswered," he said.

Criticizing Israel for what he called "genocide in Gaza", the president said that "it is imperative that the international community should immediately ... secure a permanent cease-fire in Gaza and bring an end to the desperate barbarism of Israel in Lebanon before it engulfs the region and the world".

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Policy: Monetary tools outlined to bolster stock market

From page 1

A new set of policies aimed at further stabilizing the real estate market was also unveiled at the news conference, including a 0.5 percentage point reduction in average existing mortgage rates and lowering the minimum down payment ratio from the current 25 percent to 15 percent on second homes, among others.

Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOCI China, told China Daily that Tuesday's policy package was more proactive and comprehensive than expectations and indicated policymakers' intention to deliver timely policy support, to help strengthen society's confidence in achieving the economic growth target of about 5 percent for the year.

Guan said fiscal policy should synergize with accommodative monetary measures. Measures such

as expanding this year's government deficit to boost fiscal spending and optimizing the fiscal spending structure to improve people's livelihoods are worth considering, especially in light of households' reluctance to consume and invest due to debt burdens.

China's stock and foreign exchange markets reacted positively to the policy release, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index jumping 4.15 percent to Tuesday's close at 2,863.13 points, the biggest rise in about four years.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, said the new policies will provide much-needed support to homeowners by alleviating their debt burden and boosting consumer spending.

Wang said the higher level of existing mortgage interest rates

compared with new mortgages has triggered a notable wave of early loan repayments, posing a drag on household consumption.

According to a central bank report released in July, the average monthly early repayment volume reached 387 billion yuan between September and December last year, which translates to an annualized early mortgage repayment of around 4.6 trillion yuan.

While the mortgage rate cuts, on the other side, will have a tangible impact on bank earnings, the authorities are likely to take a balanced approach, such as orderly adjustments to deposit rates to ensure the banking sector's resilience, Wang said.

To enhance banks' capability to support the real economy, Li Yunze, head of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, said that

China plans to increase the tier-1 capital of six major commercial banks.

Tier-1 capital refers to the core capital held in a bank's reserves, including common stock and disclosed reserves.

PBOC Governor Pan also outlined new monetary tools to bolster the stock market, including a swap facility for securities, fund and insurance companies, which will allow eligible institutions to obtain liquidity from the central bank by pledging assets.

Pan said the PBOC will also introduce a relending facility to encourage banks to provide loans to listed companies and major shareholders to support share repurchases and shareholding increases.

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## Ties: Sino-Spanish relations should progress in 'every possible way'

From page 1

Thus from a trade and commerce perspective, Spain and China have a close and strong relationship.

As mentioned earlier, Sanchez's visit to China was no random coincidence. Recently, the European Union proposed import tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles, a measure that was supported by Spain.

Now, EU member states are due to vote in October on whether to adopt these additional duties of as much as 36.3 percent on Chinese EVs, to which China has responded by launching anti-dumping investigations into imports of pork and dairy from Europe. As mentioned before, pork is the second

most exported Spanish product to China.

Sanchez said during his trip to China that the EU should reconsider these proposed import tariffs on Chinese-made EVs, and urged Brussels and Beijing to find a compromise to avoid a trade war.

At an event in an industrial park in the Chinese city of Kunshan, Jiangsu province, Sanchez mentioned that "I have to be frank, we have to reconsider our position, all of us. Not only the member states but also the (European) Commission".

"We don't need another war, in this case, a trade war. I think we need to build bridges between the European Union and China, and from Spain we will be constructive and try to find a compromise

between China and the European Commission," he said.

While differences will remain between China and the EU, the truth is that there are more synergies than differences, and both parties should focus on these synergies and common interests to build an enhanced mutually constructive relationship.

Nevertheless, leaving some differences aside, meetings between leaders from EU countries and China are always good news.

Given that the United States and China are the world's two biggest economies, and given the fact that in today's globalized world, they are undoubtedly intertwined, it is vital and crucial for both countries to cooperate as much as possible.

The same could be applied to EU-China relations: given that China is the world's second-largest economy, and that the EU, as a bloc, is the third-largest economy in the world, accounting for one-sixth of global trade. Both parties should have a frank and cooperative relationship. According to European Commission statistics, China is the EU's second-largest trading partner for goods after the US, while China is the EU's third-largest partner for exports and the biggest for imports.

While the EU considers that reciprocity, achieving a level playing field and addressing asymmetries in the relationship are matters of priority in today's globalized world. The EU and China are undoubtedly intertwined and it is vital and cru-

cial for both countries to cooperate as much as possible. It is also true that they will compete in certain areas, but the most important idea must be that of cooperation rather than competition.

To sum up, from the standpoint of Sino-Spanish relations, Sanchez's visit shows once again the importance of relations between Spain and China. From the standpoint of EU-China relations, a trade war should be avoided. The US-China trade war started in 2018 under the Donald Trump administration proved harmful not only for both the US and China, but also for the world. An EU-China trade war would not benefit anyone. As mentioned by Sanchez, the EU should reconsider proposed import tariffs

on Chinese-made EVs, and Brussels and Beijing should find a compromise that avoids a trade war. Protectionism and bilateralism instead of free trade and multilateralism can never be the solution.

Given that China is the world's second-largest economy and the EU is the third one, and given that we are living in a globalized world, it is imperative for both parties to keep enhancing a mutually constructive and stable relationship. Not just trade, but in every possible way such as tourism and exchange students, since closer relationships between Spain (and the whole EU) and China will not only benefit both parties, but the whole world.

The author is a fintech adviser, researcher and former business analyst for a Hong Kong publicly listed company. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Robo Rover



Children interact with a robotic dog at Liya Primary School in Tongdao Dong autonomous county, in Huaihua, Hunan province, on Monday. The city organized a series of activities at its primary and secondary schools to mark National Science Popularization Day, aiming to promote scientific knowledge and inspire children's passion for science while encouraging them to explore scientific mysteries.

SU YONGZHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Macao lets bus users pay with WeChat

By CHAI HUA in Hong Kong  
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Public buses in Macao began accepting fare payments by QR code from mainland and Hong Kong WeChat Pay platforms on Tuesday, providing more payment options for residents and travelers.

The addition of the platform is the latest in a series of efforts by the city's public transportation department to diversify its digital payment solutions. More than 90 percent of its public buses already accept Alipay, China UnionPay's Cloud QuickPass and local platform Simple Pay+.

Users can search for the mini-program "Transit QR Code" on WeChat and scan the QR code on the buses after verifying their identity.

The Transport Bureau of the Macao Special Administrative Region announced that it will keep a close eye on the effectiveness of the new payment methods and continue coordinating the introduction of other innovative options. "We aim to further facilitate traveling convenience for residents and tourists," the bureau said.

Macao has been making big strides to keep pace with technological advances and optimize its digital economic development.

Earlier this month, palm scan payment supported by Chinese technology giant Tencent was also launched in Macao. In the first phase of its application, more than 60 retail outlets at StarWorld Hotel, Galaxy Macau, Broadway Macau and Galaxy Arena have supported the novel payment solution.

"The total number of mobile payment transactions in Macao last year were 22 times higher than four years ago," said Tai Kin-ip, director of Macao's Economic and Technological Development Bureau.

Bringing more cutting-edge payment methods to Macao is expected to inject new vitality into the digitalization and integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, as mainland consumers are accustomed to electronic payments.

However, there are still a few public transportation options that do not fully accept fare payments via QR codes, including the Macao Light Rapid Transit system.

Besides transportation payment, Macao is also upgrading its legal tender currency as the Monetary Authority is conducting research and development of the "Digital Macao Pataca," or e-Mop.

The authority announced on Monday plans to launch a prototype system with basic functions by the end of this year that will enable the public to use e-Mop for some situations during the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland.

## Grad student's janitorial job choice sparks debate

Some say he's wasting education; others laud him for finding work in slow market

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha  
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Reports that a college student pursuing a master's degree in physics enrolled to work as a janitor at a secondary school in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, have ignited heated debate online about whether he has made the best career choice.

According to a notice issued by the Suzhou High School Affiliated to Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the 24-year-old is expected to work as a janitor at the school.

A previous notice issued by the school did not list any requirements for a candidate's academic background, and only said it was looking for a male under age 50.

The master's student, Li Yongkang, told the Gusu Evening News that he had previously obtained a job offer from the school to work as a teacher.

However, he was unable to get his master's degree as he had not published enough academic papers during his postgraduate study, so he could not work at the school as a teacher.

Meanwhile, he was satisfied with the school's work environment while doing an internship there, so he applied to become a janitor at the school and got the job.

"Becoming a teacher is my dream, and I will start my new job while also waiting for the next opportunity to realize my teaching dream," he said.

Wang Jian, Party secretary of the school, said it had consulted with Li

“It has become more evident that 'looking fancy' is not the top concern for college graduates looking for jobs.”

Tao Yongfeng, director of the student enrollment and employment guidance office at Xiangtan University

and will arrange for him to become a teaching assistant on the school's physics teaching team.

The news sparked heated discussions online and became a trending topic on social media platforms, with many saying that his choice was a waste of education resources. Others said Li's choice should be respected and some said that given the current tough job market, he was lucky to find a job.

Due to the long-held belief among Chinese people favoring white-collar work over labor-intensive work and the apparent salary gap between the two, most people in the country still prefer office work to blue-collar work.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate of young people age 16 to 24 excluding students stood at 18.8 percent in August, up 1.7 percentage points

from a month earlier.

The country is expected to have 11.79 million new college graduates this year, 210,000 more than a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Education.

Hu Xunhan, a senior undergraduate student in journalism at Changsha University of Science & Technology, said she has chosen to pursue a master's degree because she wants to study at a better university and defer entering the job market for a few years because it is too competitive.

Tao Yongfeng, director of the student enrollment and employment guidance office at Xiangtan University, said it is normal for college graduates to choose jobs that are "not-so-decent" from a traditional viewpoint nowadays and, in fact, it has become a new trend.

"It has become more evident that 'looking fancy' is not the top concern for college graduates looking for jobs," he said. "They are more focused on finding something they are interested in and suitable for them, which I believe is the best choice for them."

As college graduates born after 2000 are less concerned with financial burdens, salary also becomes less important, and they place more value on interest, room for growth, the work environment and workplace culture, Tao said.

They are taking more time to carefully make the best choice for themselves. While many students have chosen stable jobs in government institutions, an increasing number of students are also starting their own businesses or working in new industries, he said.

## High-quality employment a priority for socioeconomic development

By CHENG SI  
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China is ramping up efforts to boost high-quality employment growth by developing more new professions, encouraging entrepreneurship and skills education, and tightening supervision of the human resources market to secure a fairer, healthier working environment for people.

Li Zhong, vice-minister of human resources and social security, said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday that high-quality employment is a priority of the nation's socioeconomic development, and authorities must give more support to industries and companies that are better suited to create job opportunities.

He said authorities need to establish a forecast mechanism for human resources demands based on technological and industrial advancement and regularly publish information about professions or occupations in urgent demand to

relieve the current structural imbalance between labor force supply and employers' needs.

Li said the employment of young people, which requires systematic policy and financial support and the provision of smoother career promotion channels, remains a top priority for the ministry.

Senior officials have also attached importance to skills education and training, another important incubator of job opportunities.

Ministry spokesman Lu Aihong cited the outstanding performance of young Chinese at the recent WorldSkills competition while explaining the positive role of skills in realizing self-worth and boosting employment. The competition was held in Lyon, France, from Sept 10 to 15.

"It's the seventh time China sent a delegation to compete in the WorldSkills, which is recognized as the Olympics of skills," he said. "The 68 young people from China won 36 golds, nine silvers and four bronzes, showing the world their superior skills and upbeat spirits."

Lu said 283 young Chinese have competed at WorldSkills since 2010, and the honors they have won have given them more space for self-growth and more job opportunities.

"Many of these candidates and medal winners have devoted themselves to passing down skills, becoming good examples for the young generation," he added.

Li, the vice-minister, said the ministry will further optimize job services to ensure that people looking for work get fairer, easier access to more professional job-seeking guidance and services. He added that the ministry will also offer more support to entrepreneurs to help them start businesses.

"Also, we will continue to perfect the labor or working regulations and expand social security coverage to protect people's working rights," he said. "Improper or illegal behavior, including job discrimination, salary arrears or unreasonable layoffs, will be cracked down upon to ensure the stability and health of the job market."

## Two pandas to arrive in HK on Thursday

By STEPHY ZHANG in Hong Kong  
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A pair of giant pandas presented to Hong Kong as gifts by the central government will arrive in the special administrative region from Sichuan province on Thursday, and will be named in a public campaign next month, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu announced on Tuesday.

To improve their living environment, the Hong Kong Jockey Club announced it will donate over HK\$121 million to enhance and expand the giant panda habitat at Ocean Park.

Lee said that a welcome ceremony for the national treasures will be hosted by Chief Secretary for Administration Chan Kwok-ki on their arrival at Hong Kong International Airport.

Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Kevin Yeung Yun-hung has left for Sichuan to oversee the handover arrangements and will participate in a farewell ceremony for the pandas on Wednesday that will be organized by the China Conservation and Research Centre for the Giant Panda.

Both pandas are 5 years old and have been named previously. The male is called An An, weighing over 130 kilograms, and the female is named Ke Ke, weighing about 100 kg.

Lee said he hopes Hong Kong can choose meaningful names for the pandas in order to bring out their traits. A panda-themed drawing competition will also be held, while the postal service plans to issue panda-themed stamps and philatelic products in December.

The Hong Kong government has been making preparations for the pandas' arrival, and Ocean Park, which will be their home, has completed upgrading its panda enclosure with new climbing structures and improved monitoring and renovated grounds.

Lee said the giant pandas will be quarantined at Ocean Park for at least 30 days after their arrival, and for another month to help them acclimatize to the new environment. The animals are expected to meet members of the public by mid-December.

With the new pair of pandas, the panda population in the city will be increased to six, including two locally born panda twins.

Lee said that the two panda cubs in Hong Kong are in a rapid growth phase, and he hopes they can meet residents early next year. When they exhibit distinct physical features, it will be an opportune time to hold another naming campaign.

Also on Tuesday, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust announced the donation to help improve the giant panda habitat at Ocean Park, including adding facilities to create snow and improving natural landscapes.

The donation will also support community educational programs for underprivileged students to visit the giant pandas at Ocean Park.

Earlier, the Hong Kong Tourism Board launched a one-stop webpage for the pandas to keep residents and tourists informed about the latest panda updates, and welcoming events for the pandas have already kicked off in various districts across Hong Kong.



Visitors appreciate a jade dragon on display at an exhibition at the Hong Kong Palace Museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District on Tuesday. ADAM LAM / CHINA DAILY

## Experts hope cultural exhibit inspires youth

By WU KUNLING in Hong Kong  
amberwu@chinadailyhk.com

The Hong Kong Palace Museum has opened an exhibition featuring over 100 precious artifacts that span 5,800 years of history, marking one of the most comprehensive displays of the origins and early development of Chinese civilization.

The exhibition is one of several events being held in the city to celebrate the upcoming National Day on Oct 1.

Cultural experts in Hong Kong expressed their hope that the exhibition will encourage young residents to delve into the roots and evolution of Chinese culture and help them foster a deeper appreciation for traditional values.

Considered one of the most comprehensive overviews of the formation and early development of Chinese civilization in recent years, the exhibition will run from Wednesday to Feb 7.

It will showcase nearly 110 precious objects from 14 major cultural institutions on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong. The artifacts span from the Neolithic period to the Xia Dynasty (c. 21st century-16th century BC), reflecting the lives of ancestors from over 5,800 years ago. Nearly all the treasures are to be displayed in Hong Kong for the first time.

Sixteen of the exhibits are grade-one national treasures, including a jade dragon from the Hongshan culture between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago, which is considered the original representation of the image of a dragon in China.

Other notable objects include a

jade tortoise and a seated human figure, both unearthed from the Niuheliang site during the same Hongshan period, reflecting the unique customs of burying the deceased with jade.

Describing the traditional culture as the "root" and soul of the Chinese nation, Louis Ng Chi-wa, the director of the Hong Kong Palace Museum, said he hopes that the exhibition will provide an opportunity for residents to learn more about Chinese culture and history.

He said he hopes residents will enhance their cultural confidence through understanding the origins and development of Chinese civilization and witnessing its continuity, innovation and inclusiveness.

Henry Tang Ying-yan, chairman of the board of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, said the exhibition will offer a compelling glimpse into the lives of Chinese ancestors, who laid the foundation for the enduring Chinese lineage that continues to this day.

Tan Ping, director of Art Exhibition China and co-organizer of the exhibition, said it also showcases precious cultural relics unearthed in Hong Kong.

To better display the precious cultural relics, the exhibition uses a wealth of multimedia technology. For instance, the exhibition brings the ancient Shimao site to life through a 270-degree panoramic multimedia project, with acclaimed Hong Kong singer and actor Julian Cheung Chi-lam narrating the audio guide and leading visitors through the ancient site with his voice.

**Editor's note:** As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.

### FIRST PERSON

# Protection vital in donkey work

## Conservation raises awareness of plight of wild ungulates

**Bi Junhui**, deputy dean of the College of Life Sciences and Technology at Inner Mongolia Normal University and author of the book *Research on the Mongolian Wild Donkey*

The population of Mongolian wild donkeys, or kulan, within China is primarily distributed in the Xinjiang Uygur and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions. Over the past two years, I have conducted extensive surveys in the Kalamaili National Nature Reserve in Xinjiang and estimate that the population of Mongolian wild donkeys in this area ranges between 4,000 and 5,000 individuals.

In Inner Mongolia, the number is relatively smaller, especially during the summer. This is due to their migration between Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, moving southward in winter and northward in summer. Ten years ago, the summer population of the donkeys in Inner Mongolia was about 100. In recent years, their numbers have increased, reaching between 200 and 300.

The Mongolian wild donkey is classified as a first-class national protected animal in China. This designation highlights both their scarcity and the significant challenges they face in their habitat, necessitating urgent human attention and protection.

They inhabit desert and semi-desert regions, requiring vast open spaces, adequate food resources and water. However, grasslands in Inner Mongolia have become extensively fragmented, with over 80 percent of the grasslands allocated to individuals. To protect their pastures, herders have built fences, which severely restrict the free movement and survival of the donkeys.

Fences not only hinder the migration of the donkeys but also pose a direct threat to their safety. Many have been injured or even killed while attempting to cross these barriers.

Last year, while driving over 30 kilometers along the China-Mongolia border, I saw 14 Mongolian gazelles that had died entangled in fences. It was heartbreaking. This year, social media has shown videos of herders rescuing Mongolian wild donkeys trapped in fences.

To protect the donkeys and other ungulates, I have been advocating for restrictions on grassland fencing. In 2008, I undertook a research project for the Inner Mongolia Party Committee and proposed the establishment of a long-term mechanism for grassland ecological security. This proposal was adopted by the State Council in 2010, leading to the implementation of a long-term incentive mechanism for grassland ecological security.

Ungulates are a vital component of the grassland ecosystem, and changes in their populations can have unpredictable long-term ecological impacts. In my efforts to promote the protection of Mongolian wild donkeys and other ungulates, I have interacted with many herders who actually have a deep affection for the Mongolian wild donkey.

On one occasion, I suggested to a herder that if he liked the Mongolian wild donkey and wanted them to visit his pasture, he could leave some water in the trough after watering his livestock. The Mongolian wild donkeys would come if they found water there, and over time, they might decide to stay. He followed this advice, and now, a family of Mongolian wild donkeys lives in that area.

Protecting wildlife is not overly complicated; sometimes, we simply don't realize the impact our actions have on them. Therefore, awareness is a crucial element in conservation efforts.

Bi Junhui talked to Yan Dongjie and Yuan Hui.

Contact the writers at [yangdongjie@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:yangdongjie@chinadaily.com.cn)

### EQUUS SPECIES

There is only one genus of Equidae animals, namely the genus Equus, with seven species.



### WILD DONKEYS



These two species are not ancestors of domestic donkeys.

### EXTINCTION RISK

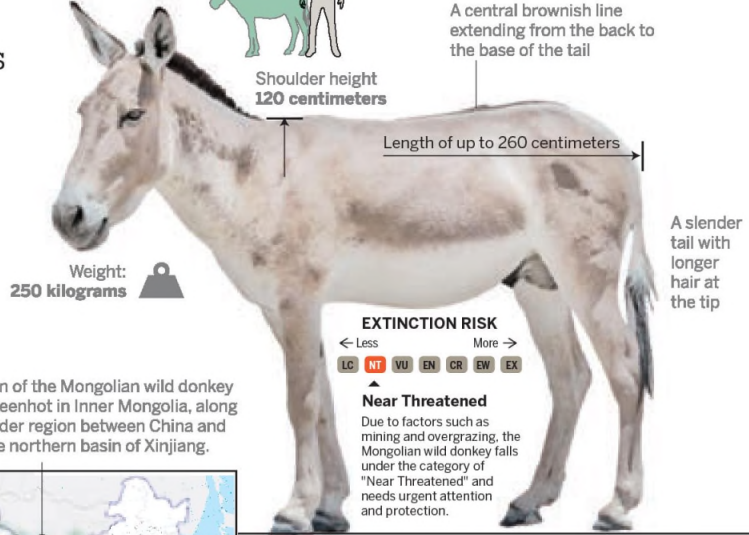


Least Concern

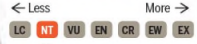
Tibetan wild donkeys remain in healthy number as a species and are classified as at lower risk of extinction.

### Equus hemionus MONGOLIAN WILD DONKEY

The Mongolian wild donkey, or kulan, is a large ungulate animal typical of desert and semi-desert landscapes.



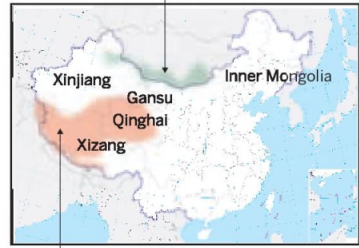
### EXTINCTION RISK



Near Threatened

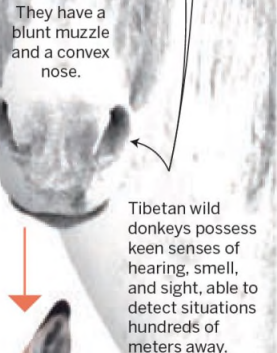
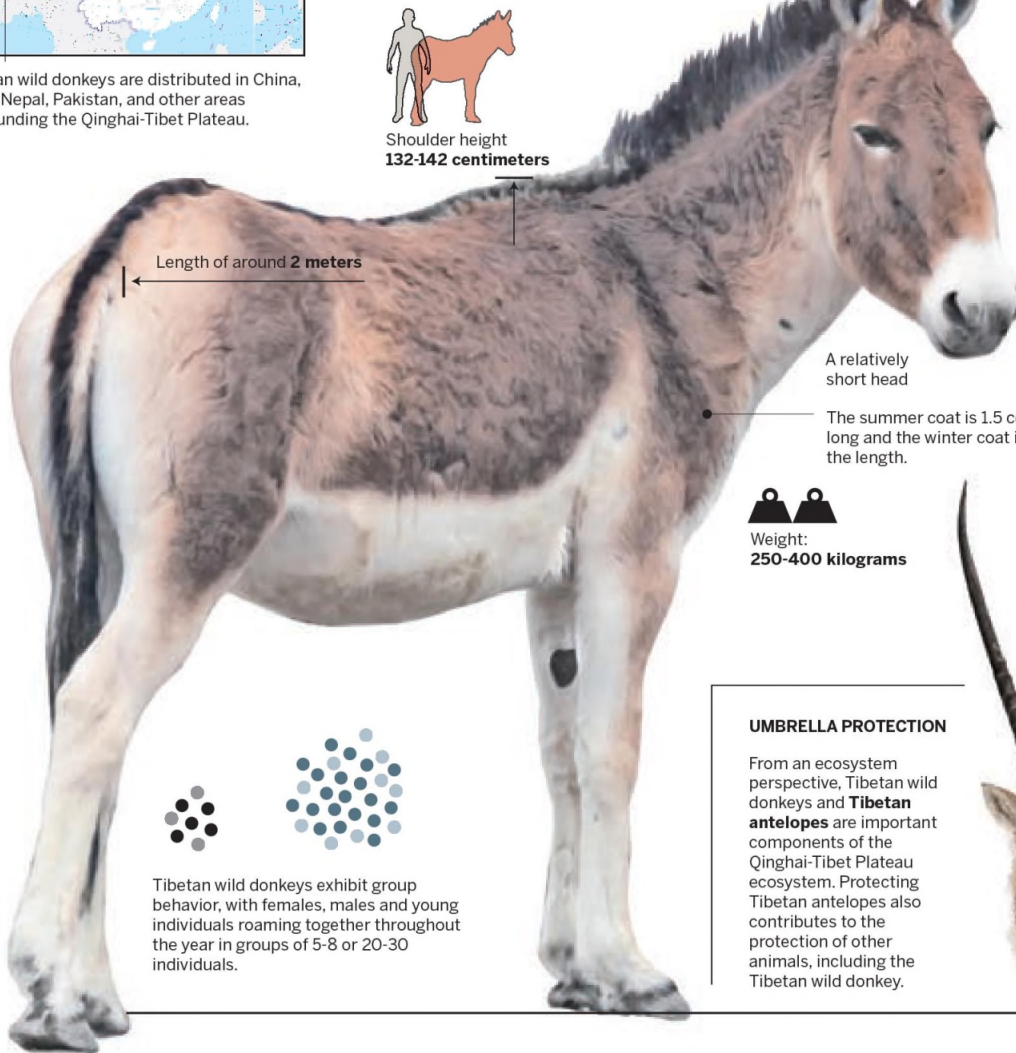
Due to factors such as mining and overgrazing, the Mongolian wild donkey falls under the category of "Near Threatened" and needs urgent attention and protection.

The distribution of the Mongolian wild donkey ranges from Erenhot in Inner Mongolia, along the narrow border region between China and Mongolia to the northern basin of Xinjiang.



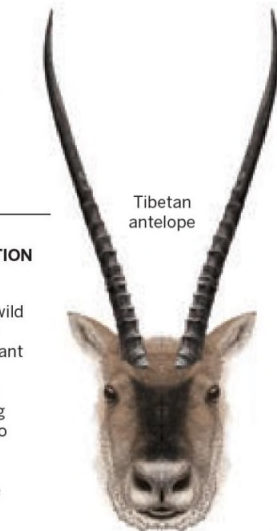
Tibetan wild donkeys are distributed in China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and other areas surrounding the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

### Equus kiang TIBETAN WILD DONKEY



They have a blunt muzzle and a convex nose.

Tibetan wild donkeys possess keen senses of hearing, smell, and sight, able to detect situations hundreds of meters away.



Weight: 250-400 kilograms

### UMBRELLA PROTECTION

From an ecosystem perspective, Tibetan wild donkeys and Tibetan antelopes are important components of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau ecosystem. Protecting Tibetan antelopes also contributes to the protection of other animals, including the Tibetan wild donkey.

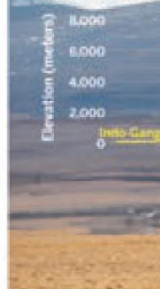
Tibetan wild donkeys exhibit group behavior, with females, males and young individuals roaming together throughout the year in groups of 5-8 or 20-30 individuals.

Tibetan wild donkeys' habitat is in the cold, arid highlands of Qinghai and Gansu provinces and the western Xizang autonomous region in China at elevations above 4,000 meters above sea level.

Tibetan wild donkeys have a strong tolerance to extreme weather conditions such as cold, sunlight and snow, enabling them to adapt to the unique environment of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau with its high altitude, low oxygen and large temperature variations.



### WILD HABITAT



SOURCE: Shaanxi Institute of Zoology

GRAPHIC BY JORGE CORTES AND YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY

### RECENT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION MEASURES

To protect the rare species of Tibetan wild donkey, the Chinese government has implemented a series of conservation measures in recent years, including:

- 01 Strengthening legal protection:** Designating the Tibetan wild donkey as a national key protected wildlife species, enhancing relevant laws and regulations, and cracking down severely on illegal hunting, killing, purchasing, transporting and selling of Tibetan wild donkeys and their products.
- 02 Establishing protection areas:** Designating natural reserves and wildlife protection areas to provide suitable habitats for Tibetan wild donkeys and reducing human interference with their habitats.
- 03 Increasing efforts in ecological protection projects:** Improving the habitat of Tibetan wild donkeys, ensuring the supply of food and water sources, promoting ecosystem recovery and stability.
- 04 Enhancing protection management systems:** Establishing a three-tier management system of bureaus, branches and management stations to improve standardized, institutionalized and information-based management, strengthening professional protection teams to enhance their operational capabilities and conservation awareness.
- 05 Raising public awareness:** Utilizing various opportunities and media platforms to promote wildlife protection laws, regulations and related knowledge, educating the public about the importance and significance of Tibetan wild donkey conservation to reduce interference and harm to them.
- 06 Strengthening scientific research and monitoring:** Increasing the understanding of the ecological habits and reproductive characteristics of Tibetan wild donkeys to provide a scientific basis for conservation measures, and adjusting protection strategies promptly through monitoring changes in their population numbers and distribution.
- 07 Combating illegal poaching:** Increasing patrols and crackdowns on illegal poaching activities to curb incidents.
- 08 Improving compensation mechanisms:** Improving the compensation mechanism for animal damage incidents, enhancing the enthusiasm of farmers and herders to participate in wildlife protection, achieving a win-win situation for protecting both public interests and wildlife.

## WORLD

Editor's note: Chinese Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang addressed the opening ceremony of the 21st China-ASEAN Expo and the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Tuesday. Following is the full text of the speech:

# Address at the Opening Ceremony of the 21st China-ASEAN Expo And China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit

Nanning, September 24, 2024

Good morning! It is a pleasure to be here with you for the 21st China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) and China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (CABIS). First of all, on behalf of the Chinese government, I wish to extend warm congratulations on the opening of CAEXPO and CABIS, and a hearty welcome to all guests present today.

Friendship between China and ASEAN goes back a long time. We are good neighbors, good friends and good partners. In October 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed that China and ASEAN countries work together to build a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and foster a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future. His proposals resonated warmly among ASEAN countries. In November 2021, at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, President Xi Jinping proposed building a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable home together, and alongside leaders of ASEAN countries, announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership. Over the years, China and ASEAN have advanced forward hand in hand; our interactions have served as the most successful and dynamic model of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, and a vivid example of the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

**We have strengthened understanding and trust through mutual respect.** China regards ASEAN as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy and a key region in high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. ASEAN countries, on their part, see in China a trustworthy and close partner. The two sides accommodate each other's major concerns, and respect each other's development paths, which has further solidified our strategic mutual trust.

**We have deepened regional economic integration through win-win cooperation.** In actively

promoting regional economic integration, we have boosted trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, further unleashing the dividends of multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements. China has been ASEAN's top trading partner for 15 consecutive years, and ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner for four years in a row. We are also a major investor and destination of investment for each other: two-way investment exceeds US\$400 billion in total.

**We have significantly improved connectivity through consultation and joint contribution.** The China-Laos Railway has transported more than 38 million passenger trips on 56,000 train services. The Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Railway has reduced the travel time between the two cities from three hours to 40 minutes. The China-Laos-Thailand-Malaysia express railway service has been officially launched. As these and many other key projects are completed and put into operation, they provide a strong underpinning to the local economies, and bring tangible benefits to our peoples in hundreds of millions.

**We have tightened cultural and people-to-people bonds through friendly exchanges.** Cooperation in education, science and technology, culture, tourism and other fields is thriving, contributing to more frequent exchanges and a closer relationship between our peoples. During the pandemic in particular, the two sides worked closely together to safeguard peoples' lives and health, a full demonstration of true friendship in times of need.

In a few days' time, the People's Republic of China will celebrate its 75th birthday. In the past 75 years, the hardworking Chinese people have created a Chinese miracle that has riveted the attention of the world. Especially since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, China has witnessed historic achievements and historic changes in its development. We are proud of



Chinese Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang (middle) attends the opening ceremony of the 21st China-ASEAN Expo and the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning, South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Tuesday. CHEN GUANYAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

what our country has accomplished, and are fully confident about its future. Right now, China is working to build itself into a great modern socialist country and to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through a Chinese path to modernization. This will bring huge opportunities to the rest of the world. We will continue to follow the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, deepen practical cooperation with ASEAN countries, and jointly usher in a new chapter in the building of a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

**First, we will bring strategic mutual trust to a new height.** In jointly implementing the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), we need to strengthen cooperation in relevant areas, and

respond to various global challenges. We need to further synergize our development plans, engage in high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, collaborate under the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and contribute more to regional and global prosperity and stability.

**Second, we will elevate openness and cooperation to a new level.** We need to deliver a high-quality implementation of the RCEP, and wrap up the negotiations on the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement 3.0 as soon as possible. We need to steadily expand institutional opening up, and harmonize our rules, regulations, management and standards. We need to step up industrial cooperation, and build more stable and smooth cross-border industrial and supply chains. Harnessing the strength of its super-sized market, China is ready to import more quality products

from ASEAN countries.

**Third, we will create a new framework of all-round connectivity.** We need to strengthen infrastructure connectivity covering rail, roads, ports, airports, electricity and communications, and pursue high-level cooperation in building the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor. We need to make steady progress in key economic corridors and major projects, connect the key nodes in the regional infrastructure network, and forge fourfold connectivity of land, sea, air and the Internet. We need to leverage the China-ASEAN Information Harbor to promote digital connectivity and information sharing, and work together for a digital Silk Road.

**Fourth, we will explore new areas of cooperation in scientific and technological innovation.** We need to seize the opportunities offered by the latest round of technological revolution and industrial

transformation, step up innovation cooperation and fruits sharing, and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces. As we carry out the China-ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Enhancing Program, we need to strengthen research collaboration in focused areas, and speed up the building of joint labs and other collaboration platforms. China is ready to make good use of existing mechanisms such as the China-ASEAN Technology Transfer Center to continue to provide advanced and applicable technologies to ASEAN and enable more innovation fruits to benefit the people on both sides.

**Fifth, we will foster new highlights in people-to-people interactions.** We need to make the most of the China-ASEAN Year of People-to-People Exchanges, further our cooperation in culture, tourism, training and youth, and increase practical exchanges at subnational levels and between friendly organizations. We will open and run well the China-ASEAN Institutes of Modern Craftsmanship, implement the China-ASEAN Youth Leaders Growth Program with innovative ideas, and promote more exchanges and mutual learning between the younger generation. We will deliver more "small and beautiful" livelihood projects to consolidate public support for China-ASEAN relations.

Both CAEXPO and CABIS are results-oriented platforms for advancing regional economic integration. I hope you will engage in in-depth exchanges and discussions, help China-ASEAN cooperation produce more fruits, and make your contributions to regional peace, stability, development and prosperity.

To conclude, I wish today's event a full success, and wish our distinguished guests happiness and every success.

Thank you.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## BRICS meet highlights clear path to modernization

MOSCOW — The BRICS Seminar on Governance and Cultural Exchanges Forum 2024 was held Monday in Moscow, focusing on BRICS countries' paths to modernization.

The event was attended by more than 120 representatives from BRICS countries and international organizations. Attendees noted that those countries involved are a crucial force in shaping the international order and representing the future direction of human society.

The autonomous choice of development paths by BRICS countries is not only essential for their growth but also contributes significantly to global governance and the international order, the participants said.

The countries should resist any form of development coercion, firmly defend their right to development and encourage other developing nations to explore independent development paths, they noted.

BRICS countries should also enhance communication around innovation-driven development, jointly exploring ways to boost international competitiveness through technological and institutional innovation and improve the quality of life for citizens to guide the stable and long-term development of the Global South, the attendees added.



A Russian girl interacts with a giant panda doll during the annual launch of "UPanda Cinema" and the BRICS film and cultural exchange in Moscow on Sunday. TIAN BING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Participants praised the tremendous achievements of China's modernization, viewing it as a valuable reference and source of inspiration for other developing countries seeking modernization paths suited to their national conditions.

The forum was co-organized by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, China International Communications Group, Rossiyskaya Gazeta and the Russia-China Friendship Association.

### Cultural event

On Sunday, the annual launch of "UPanda Cinema" and the BRICS film and cultural exchange event kicked off in Moscow, with the participation of more than 900 representatives from media organizations, film institutions and youth groups of BRICS countries.

Organizers of the event said that

cooperation in the film and television sector is an essential part of cultural exchanges and mutual learning, expressing hope that this event will allow people in BRICS countries to better understand China's development in the new era.

They affirmed their commitment to carrying forward the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, fostering cultural exchanges and cooperation and painting a picture of shared friendship.

Andrey Denisov, first deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, said that thanks to the joint efforts of the Russian and Chinese media, "UPanda Cinema" was successfully launched in Russia, with Chinese programs welcomed by Russian viewers and praised by Russian critics.

XINHUA

## Correct attitude toward history key to ties

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo  
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China and Japan should embrace the wisdom of unity in diversity, adopt a rational perspective on each other's development, and explore avenues for future cooperation, said experts at a forum on Sino-Japanese friendship and people-to-people exchanges.

Held in Tokyo on Monday, the forum gathered nearly 60 experts from both countries. It was co-hosted by the China Foundation for Human Rights Development and the Japan-China Friendship Center. Qin Liang, CFHRD's deputy secretary-general, emphasized that a correct attitude toward history has always been an important political foundation for the development of China-Japan relations.

Both sides should adhere to the principle of learning from history while looking toward the future, approaching the development of bilateral relations from a broader perspective. This requires respecting and reflecting on history, handling historical issues prudently and carefully, and sending a positive message to the world about facing history head-on, said Qin.

Urging the two countries to pursue mutual cooperation, he noted that China and Japan are important neighbors with extensive common interests and shared concerns. Only by truly embedding the political consensus of cooperation and not posing a threat to each other can both nations achieve mutual development and prosperity, ultimately

benefiting their people, Qin added.

He urged both countries to consistently strive toward shared goals, which include deepening practical cooperation in various fields and fostering mutual interests and understanding between their people.

Yuji Miyamoto, president of the Japan-China Friendship Center, said there is no alternative to peace, friendship, and cooperation for China and Japan, as these are in the fundamental interests of both nations.

### Academic exchanges

Pointing out that the current state of academic exchanges between Japan and China is not very good, he said many young people are unable to engage in academic exchanges with the other country. Miyamoto emphasized the need for Japanese society to develop a proper understanding of Chinese society, starting with researchers. Once the latter gain an accurate understanding of China, this knowledge can then be shared more broadly across Japanese society.

"Our task under the current circumstances is to establish the relationship between Japan and China on the foundation of peace, friendship, and cooperation, and to discuss how to further develop it. To achieve this, intellectuals from both sides should collaborate with each other," said Miyamoto.

"We must start by considering issues from the other's standpoint, and if there are things we don't understand, we should actively ask questions to deepen our understanding. Only then can we explore

the direction in which Japan and China can cooperate in the future," Miyamoto said.

Last year, the leaders of China and Japan reaffirmed the positioning of comprehensively advancing the strategic and mutually beneficial relations between the two countries, and reached an important consensus on jointly building a constructive and stable relationship that meets the demands of the new era.

Shi Yong, minister of the Chinese embassy in Japan, emphasized the need for both countries to follow this important consensus.

He noted that alongside managing conflicts and differences, both nations should focus on strengthening cultural and people-to-people exchanges to foster mutual understanding and trust. This, he said, would provide essential support for sustaining China-Japan friendship and reinforce public opinion as a key foundation for the future development of bilateral relations.

Tomoki Kamo, dean of the Faculty of Policy Management at Keio University, noted that since the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China in 1972, the two countries have confirmed their shared interests and values, and established a stable bilateral relationship.

"Now, Japan and China are at a stage where they need to reaffirm their common interests and values," said Kamo. There is a need to increase channels for communicating national intentions between the two governments as well as between the private sectors, he added.

## WORLD

# Calls mount for calm as conflict rages

Intl community urges de-escalation in Middle East amid fears of all-out war

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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The international community is calling for an end to indiscriminate attacks in Lebanon that have killed more than 550 people, sent tens of thousands fleeing and raised fears of an escalation into a full-scale war in the region.

Israel's military said on Tuesday it hit dozens of Hezbollah targets overnight, a day after 558 people, including 50 children, were killed and 1,835 wounded in the deadliest bombardment since a devastating war in 2006.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said six people were killed and 15 injured on Tuesday in an Israeli strike on southern Beirut.

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati condemned Israel's "destructive plan" on his country and said the continued Israeli aggression is a war of extermination in every sense, Middle Eastern media reported.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "gravely alarmed by the escalating situation along the Blue Line", referring to the demarcation line dividing Lebanon from Israel and the occupied Golan Heights, as well as "the large number of civilian casualties".

Guterres also "expresses great concern for the safety of civilians, both in southern Lebanon and in northern Israel as well as the UN staff there in those areas", his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, meeting his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib in New York, said China firmly supports Lebanon in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and national dignity.

Regarding Israel's large-scale airstrike, Wang said China "strongly condemns this violation of the basic norms of international relations".

"No matter how the situation changes, we will always stand on the side of justice and our Arab brothers, including Lebanon," he said, adding China "firmly opposes indiscriminate attacks on civilians".

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday that China opposes any infringement on Lebanon's sovereignty and security.

"We oppose and condemn any move that harms innocent civilians," he said.

"We call on relevant parties to take immediate measures to cool down the situation, prevent further escalation of tensions in the region, uphold peace and stability in the Middle East, and protect the safety of the people there."

In a video message appealing to the people of Lebanon, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu clarified that Israel's war "was not with you", but with Hezbollah.

Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, described Israel's airstrikes across Lebanese villages and cities as "the most violent in 11 months" as residential areas and densely populated neighborhoods were bombed.

He urged for immediate de-escalation by all parties to the conflict and for an end to the indiscriminate attacks that destroy civilian homes and infrastructure.

The appeals came after last week's explosions of Hezbollah-owned pagers and walkie-talkies. The total death toll in those attacks has risen to 39, and thousands were injured, Lebanese authorities said.

Ahmad Ghouri, a senior lecturer of the School of Law, Politics and Society at the University of Sussex in England, and managing editor of Revival Press, told China Daily that the pager attacks in Lebanon "are viewed as serious violations" of international humanitarian law.

"The simultaneous detonation

of thousands of devices without distinguishing between military targets and civilians violates the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law," Ghouri said.

"The nature of these attacks ... is considered indiscriminate. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law because they fail to target specific military objectives and pose a significant risk to civilians. Such attacks could be classified as war crimes."

In an interview with CBS News, former CIA director Leon Panetta labeled the deadly pager explosions as a form of "terrorism" that had gone into the supply chain.

## Violation of sovereignty

Arie Afriansyah, an associate professor of the Faculty of Law at Universitas Indonesia, said that in the case of interstate armed conflict, the violation of sovereignty "is always the case of any attack".

"It is irrelevant whether you are using any technology or not. As long as the attack is directed toward your enemy, it is part of the relations in wartime," Afriansyah told China Daily.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog, in an interview with Sky News, denied his country was behind the blasts, saying it does not want to go to war with Lebanon. His denial came amid numerous media reports insinuating that Israel was behind the device attacks.

Moreover, as world leaders are in New York for the 79th UN General Assembly, more than a dozen international humanitarian groups published a joint statement on the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA appealing to end the "appalling human suffering and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza".

Some of the signatories include UNICEF, Save the Children and the World Health Organization.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

## Road to recovery



Emergency crews pump floodwaters from a submerged road at Marston Moretaine near Bedford, England, on Monday, after torrential rains lashed parts of England and Wales, disrupting travel and causing significant damage to properties. TOBY MELVILLE / REUTERS

## Scholz warns against German bank takeover

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
jonathan@mail.chinadailyuk.com

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has voiced concern about a potential "hostile takeover" of Commerzbank, following the announcement that Italy's UniCredit had substantially increased its stake in Germany's second-largest bank.

Scholz issued a warning to UniCredit against any "unfriendly" maneuvers in the wake of the Italian bank's disclosure that it had boosted its shareholding in Commerzbank from 9 percent to 21 percent, making it the largest shareholder ahead of the German state, which owns 12 percent.

The European banking sector, particularly in Germany, was surprised

earlier this month when UniCredit revealed it had acquired a 9 percent stake in Commerzbank, and events have now intensified after Andrea Orcel, UniCredit's chief executive, hinted at the possibility of a complete takeover.

"Unfriendly attacks, hostile takeovers are not a good thing for banks, which is why the German government has taken a clear position here," Scholz told Reuters on Monday. "We do not consider this to be an appropriate course of action."

Commerzbank is a lender that "operates successfully" and plays a vital role in the German economy, Scholz added, noting the bank's importance in providing necessary funding to small and medium-sized companies in the country.

In the wake of UniCredit's disclosure on Monday, a government official informed the Financial Times that Berlin "supports the strategy of Commerzbank which is geared toward independence".

"We do not support a takeover and we have informed UniCredit about this," the official said.

In response to Scholz's remarks, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani told Italian media: "These are private but legitimate initiatives. I do not understand why an Italian company buying from the European market would be a hostile act."

Europe operated on a free market system with established rules, Tajani said. "It seems to me that UniCredit has respected them."

## Forum reveals deep distrust between Asian American scientists and NIH

By MAY ZHOU in New York  
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

A recent forum aimed at repairing the relationship between the US National Institutes of Health and Asian American scientists has revealed the depth of distrust and the significant work needed to rebuild it.

More than 650 people registered for the online forum, hosted on Thursday by the Asian American Scholar Forum and the NIH, and more than 60 questions were submitted, said Gisela Perez Kusakawa, executive director of the AASF and moderator of the discussion.

"This forum is really of critical importance and very timely for the community with many very much interested in hearing directly" from the NIH leadership, Kusakawa said.

Most of the comments posted in the forum's Zoom chat were expressions of discontent.

NIH Director Monica Bertagnoli said she is "deeply concerned about the difficult climate our valued Asian research colleagues have been facing", and the NIH wants to "continue to hear from you, and particularly from those who may have lost trust in institutional and government support".

NIH Principal Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak then addressed the questions raised by the scientists.

However, the leadership and the

participants did not agree on what occurred when the NIH in 2016 first sent out letters to leaders of more than 100 institutions, requesting verification of proper research fund usage.

The Asian Faculty Association at Yale University, citing a Science magazine report titled "Pall of suspicion", said Michael Lauer, deputy director for extramural research at the NIH, forced universities to place principal investigators on involuntary leave during investigations.

"Will there be changes regarding this practice?" it questioned.

Tabak refuted the claims made in the Science article, saying such decisions are not made by any single individual at the NIH and require the support of the full NIH leadership.

Forum participant Yan Chen challenged Tabak's response, sharing personal accounts from colleagues whose labs were shut down following a call from "someone higher up in NIH" to their university's research office. "They said the process described in the Science article (was) accurate, based on their own experience," Chen said.

Tabak said the NIH may impose remedies for noncompliance, which "really depend on the specifics".

According to the Science report, 103 out of 246 targeted scientists in NIH investigations were either terminated by their institutions or resigned.

Tabak acknowledged the loss of talented scientists resulting from the NIH's investigatory practices.

"There is no doubt that unless we are successful in restoring trust, we're going to fall short here," he said. "The contributions made by Asian scientists are extraordinary. And this sort of reverse talent drain, if you will, is something that we would like to mitigate. It really comes down, though, to trust."

With Congress poised to reactivate the discontinued China Initiative program, Bertagnoli and Tabak pointed to the NIH procedure as a way to stand against political pressure that could lead to targeting or overzealous scrutiny of Asian American scholars.

However, another forum participant, Yihong Ye, saw the potential revival of the China Initiative as a failure on the part of the NIH.

"While our politicians may not understand how science is done and why international collaboration is important, NIH, particularly leaders at NIH, should know that well and should have the responsibility to educate our politicians and guide them to reach the best policy," Ye said.

"Knowing that the previous policy, which was initially launched to stop foreign spies, failed completely to achieve its goal and still let our politicians restart that failed policy is a big disappointment."

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## BUSINESS

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# Shanghai bourse surge hits 4-yr high

Stock market's bullish rebound comes amid supportive measures

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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Boosted by news of supportive measures addressing the benchmark interest rate, a share stabilization fund and new monetary policy tools to support bourses, the A-share market rallied strongly on Tuesday, with upward momentum expected to continue in anticipation of more long-term capital inflows, experts said.

Their comments were made on Tuesday when the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index closed up 4.15 percent, the largest single-day gain in over four years. With this, the SCI regained its 2800-point threshold to close at 2863.13 points. The Shenzhen Component Index jumped 4.36 percent while the tech-heavy ChiNext in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, ended 5.54 percent higher. The combined trading value on the Shanghai and Shenzhen bourses surged 76.3 percent from a day earlier to 971.3 billion yuan (\$138.1 billion).

The stock market's bullish rebound came amid a series of supportive measures announced during a news conference on Tuesday.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, announced a 50-basis-point cut for the reserve requirement ratio in the near term. This will free up about 1 trillion yuan of long-term capital inflow into the financial market, Pan said at the conference.

Meanwhile, the central bank will establish a swap program under which securities firms, asset managers and insurers can obtain liquidity from the central bank through collateralization of their financial assets such as bonds and stock exchange traded funds. The program, which serves as the first structural monetary policy tool introduced by the PBOC to support the capital market, will significantly enhance these financial companies' ability to acquire funds and increase their share holdings, he said.

The funds obtained from the program can only be used to invest

in the stock market. The first phase of the program is set at 500 billion yuan, with the scale open for expansion, Pan said.

The PBOC governor also said at the Tuesday conference that financial regulators are studying the possibility of establishing a stock market stabilization fund.

Wu Qing, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said at the Tuesday briefing that they will come up with a guideline to introduce more medium to long-term funds into the capital market.

Fan Jituo, chief strategist at Cinda Securities, said that the supportive policies for the stock market have exceeded market expectations, which will usher in more innovative tools and even an easing cycle.

Chen Guo, chief strategist at China Securities, said that the supportive policies collectively announced by the country's top financial regulators may indicate more significant policies.

The A-share market will see its risk appetite improved in the first place, thanks to the clear signals sent lately. Market liquidity will also improve as incremental capital inflow can be anticipated, Chen said.

Six measures to advance mergers and acquisitions as well as restructuring among A-share companies will be introduced. A guideline for listed companies' market valuation management will be introduced and open for public opinions soon, said Wu.

The central bank will also create a special re-lending facility to guide banks to provide loans to listed companies and their major shareholders for buybacks and increasing shareholdings, Pan said.

Xu Fei, an analyst at Wanlian Securities, said the ecosystem of the Chinese capital market will further optimize amid regulators' efforts to improve companies' quality and investment value. More long-term capital will be introduced in such a scenario. Market confidence will also be boosted along with the number of supportive macroeconomic policies, he said.



An employee works on the assembly line of a tractor manufacturer in Weifang, Shandong province.  
LI ZHENG / XINHUA

## China invests heavily in large-scale equipment renewals amid green drive

By ZHONG NAN  
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The technological transformation driven by China's large-scale equipment renewals will enable businesses to make significant strides in areas such as smart manufacturing, new energy and green technologies, further bolstering the country's economic momentum, said government officials on Tuesday.

China aims to increase its investment in equipment for manufacturing, agriculture, construction, transportation, education, culture, tourism and medical care by at least 25 percent by 2027, compared with 2023, according to an action plan released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, in March.

Complementing these efforts, the government allocated approximately 150 billion yuan (\$21.31 billion) in ultra-long special treasury bonds in July to support large-scale equipment renewals, including updating old elevators.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing, Liu Dechun, director of the department of resource conservation and environmental protection at the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic regulator, said as new industrialization and urbanization continue to advance, the demand for upgrading various types of equipment is surging.

Liu said that accelerating the implementation of equipment renewal initiatives will effectively promote China's industrial upgrading and foster the growth of new quality productive forces.

To drive the upgrading and renewal of energy-consuming

equipment, the government will prioritize key sectors such as manufacturing, construction, transportation and energy. It will provide strong support for the modernization of high energy-consuming equipment, including boilers, motors, turbines, transformers, heat exchangers, pumps, compressors and lighting systems.

Projects that result in annual electricity savings of over 500,000 kilowatt-hours or energy savings of more than 150 metric tons of coal will qualify for support, extending benefits to more small and medium-sized enterprises, he added.

Large-scale equipment upgrade policies have notably supported investment growth. Investment in the purchase of industrial equipment and tools soared by 16.8 percent year-on-year in the first eight months of 2024, data from the NDRC showed.

This is 13.4 percentage points higher than the growth of total investment in China, accounting for 64.2 percent of the contribution to the nation's overall investment growth, according to the commission.

Zhang Jianhua, deputy director of the department of planning at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said that equipment renewal and technological transformation in the industrial sector are beneficial for expanding effective investment and increasing the proportion of advanced production capacity, offering both short- and long-term advantages.

The MIIT will encourage industrial companies to seize the opportunity provided by national policies supporting large-scale

equipment renewals to carry out initiatives including upgrading advanced equipment, promoting digital transformation and advancing green equipment.

This will accelerate the renewal and transformation of production equipment and speed up industrial upgrading, said Zhang.

China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises will also invest over 3 trillion yuan for large-scale equipment upgrades over the next five years, aiming to stay at the forefront of the latest technological and industrial advancements, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council announced in late July.

Chen Jianwei, a researcher at the Beijing-based University of International Business and Economics' Academy of China Open Economy Studies, said these moves will help attract both multinational corporations and domestic companies from the private sector to increase their investments in these fields in China.

"They are likely to increase spending on promoting technological innovation, green and sustainable development, digital transformation and the circular economy within the country," said Chen.

"We are confident of our development in China, which is the world's largest elevator equipment market. We remain committed to supporting urbanization, smart cities, large-scale equipment renewals and sustainable development in the country," said Sally Loh, president for China at Otis Worldwide Corp, a United States-based elevator manufacturer.

## Pilot e-HKD programme entering 2nd phase

By LI XIAOYUN in Hong Kong  
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The Hong Kong Monetary Authority kicked off Phase 2 of the e-HKD Pilot Programme on Monday, setting the stage for a year-long exploration of innovative use cases for new forms of digital money, including the Hong Kong dollar and tokenized deposits, that can be potentially used by individuals and businesses.

The e-HKD Pilot Programme is part of Project e-HKD, which the de facto "central bank" of Hong Kong has rebranded as Project e-HKD+ to capture its broader scope.

Having wrapped up the first phase last October, the HKMA found that e-HKD could deliver value in three key areas: programmability, tokenization, and atomic settlement.

Under the second phase, 11 groups of firms from a mix of sectors, including banking, management consulting and securities investment, will dive into application cases centered around settlement of tokenized assets, programmability and offline payments. They will also assess the real-world commercial viability of new forms of digital currency for both individuals and businesses.

The first phase was about the "usability" of e-HKD, while the second phase will focus more on making it "easy to use", such as enhancing the efficiency of payments and digital asset transactions, said Howard Lee Tat-chi, deputy chief executive of the HKMA.

There are no plans for a third phase, and the timeline for when the e-HKD will be officially launched hinges on the outcome of the second phase, Lee added.

In terms of the settlement of tokenized assets, for example, Hang Seng Bank, blockchain platform Aptos Labs and Boston Consulting Group will test the commercial value of settling a tokenized fund using digital money on a public blockchain.

As for the use cases of programmability, Bank of China (Hong Kong) is establishing the e-HKD infrastructure based on a consortium blockchain network and joining hands with Sanfield (Management) Ltd and other partners to create on-chain smart contracts for the effective applications of dedicated fund mechanisms and prepayment scenarios.

Meanwhile, Bank of Communications (Hong Kong) and telecom company China Mobile (Hong Kong) will join hands to test the use of e-HKD stored on a mobile SIM card to enable e-HKD offline payments and transfers.

Similar to the first phase, an e-HKD sandbox will be made available to these participants to accelerate their prototyping, development and testing of the potential use cases.

The findings from the second phase will help the HKMA understand the real-world challenges that may be faced in designing, implementing and operating a digital money ecosystem that comprises both publicly and privately issued digital money, according to the HKMA.

"The HKMA will continue to adopt a use-case driven approach in its exploration of digital money," said Eddie Yue Wai-man, chief executive of the HKMA, adding that it will work closely with industry participants in phase 2 to co-create more innovative use cases.

Driven by common issues such as industry standards, regulatory guidance and financial infrastructure that the HKMA identified during the first phase, it will establish the e-HKD Industry Forum as a discussion platform where industry-led working groups will be set up to provide recommendations on specific topics, initially focusing on programmability.

The first batch of participants of the forum will mainly be firms that have been involved in the e-HKD Pilot Programme.

## State Grid helps farmers



Staff of State Grid Xiji County Power Supply Co visit a greenhouse in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region on Monday, to offer help with raising cattle as well as vegetable cultivation and processing. WANG MIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

### Briefly

#### Rising urbanization rate over past decades

China's urbanization rate, which measures the ratio of permanent city dwellers relative to the total population, rose by 55.52 percentage points from the end of 1949 to 66.16 percent by the end of 2023, said the National Bureau of Statistics. Over the past 75 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country has undergone the largest and fastest urbanization process in world history.

#### Renminbi strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 21 pips to 7.0510 against the US dollar on Tuesday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Private firms hiking R&D spending

By CHENG YU in Beijing and  
ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin

China's top private enterprises are ramping up their research and development expenditures, reflecting a shift toward innovation to become more competitive on the global stage, said government officials and industry experts.

According to a report released by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce on Monday, total 2023 R&D expenditures for the top 1,000 private firms reached 1.39 trillion yuan (\$197.5 billion), up 4.78 percent year-on-year. They accounted for 41.88 percent of the nation's overall R&D spending.

The manufacturing sector emerged as a major contributor, with total R&D expenditures surpassing 1 trillion yuan last year. The highest R&D investments were observed in the computer and electronics sector, which invested 318.47 billion yuan with an impressive average R&D intensity of 8.34 percent.

It was closely followed by the internet and related services sector at 245.07 billion yuan and the automotive industry at 142.56 billion yuan.

Top leadership officials emphasized earlier this year the need to deeply integrate technological

innovation with industrial innovation to develop new quality productive forces, highlighting the importance of reinforcing the role of enterprises as key innovators.

Gao Yunlong, chairman of ACFIC, said: "Private enterprises are expected to lead technological innovation, drive revolutionary breakthroughs and increase R&D investments. They can also strengthen the deep integration of industry, academia and research institutions, and play a greater role in strengthening and supplementing key industrial chains, as well as in the transformation of technological achievements and self-reliance."

Notably, China's R&D efforts are increasingly narrowing the gap with other leading economies. Some 217 of the global top 1,000 R&D-invested firms are from China, with total R&D investments amounting to 1.27 trillion yuan.

The year-on-year growth rate of R&D expenditures for these top 1,000 private enterprises last year was 12.78 percent, surpassing the growth of 6.54 percent for the global top 1,000 and 7.68 percent for the European Union. The average R&D intensity for the top 1,000 private enterprises was 3.58 percent, 0.31 percentage points higher than that of the top 1,000 firms in the EU.

Xu Qin, Party secretary of Hei-

longjiang province, said that the province will implement more supportive policies for the development of the private economy to invigorate its growth.

"Efforts will also be made to create a top-tier business environment, ensuring comprehensive support for enterprises, enhancing gains for entrepreneurs and contributing to the overall revitalization of Northeast China," Xu said.

China will scale up R&D expenditures by more than 7 percent annually during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period. Consultancy McKinsey & Co said in a report that such a growth target will make China the world's largest R&D spender.

Wang Peng, a senior researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said that amid a global economic slowdown, encouraging the private economy to increase R&D efforts is important.

"The Chinese economy will continue gathering momentum if the private sector, including smaller businesses, remains sound, given that many SMEs are being increasingly recognized for their role as leaders in new concepts and new business models," Wang said.

Contact the writers at  
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# BUSINESS



Men shoot hoops at a park in Hefei, Anhui province, on Sept 18. ZHAO MING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Fitness, community bonding seen key to wellbeing

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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The Chinese mainland has topped the global wellbeing index, driven by a growing emphasis on fitness and community bonding, according to a recent industry survey.

The Global Wellbeing Report 2024 reveals that residents on the Chinese mainland scored an average wellbeing index of 79 points, significantly higher than the global average of 66 points.

The survey has been conducted by athleisure brand Lululemon for four consecutive years among full-time workers with higher education backgrounds, primarily Millennials (28-43) and Gen X (aged 44-59) from middle-income families in second- and third-tier cities in China.

Globally, the survey covered 15

markets, including France and the United States, between April and May of this year. Respondents on the mainland outperformed the global average across physical, psychological and social dimensions, largely due to a rising focus on fitness and well-being.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated they now place more importance on personal wellbeing compared to last year.

Nearly all survey participants reported making efforts to improve their mental balance, physical health and social connections.

Exercise has proven especially beneficial, with two-thirds of respondents saying that participating in team sports offers high-quality social interaction and a strong sense of belonging.

Momo Verlin Kountchou, a fitness trainer who has worked in China for nine years, said he has noticed

a significant increase in both offline and online group class attendance.

"Workouts should be fun and provide a sense of consistent growth and well-being," he said. "Group fitness sessions truly enhance attendees' social lives in various ways."

Despite the strong overall well-being index, challenges such as stress, loneliness and societal pressures remain, according to the survey.

The male wellbeing index stands at 74 points, notably lower than the 85 points reported by women. More than half of the respondents said societal pressures hinder their ability to fully express their thoughts.

Among Generation Z, the wellbeing index increased by four points to 73, but it still lags behind the overall average of 80 points. The report indicates that men and Generation Z respondents are less likely to seek support from personal networks.

Jane Li, a therapist and well-being trainer, agreed. "We need to encourage people to express kindness and face vulnerability through exercise, which can help reduce anxiety," said Li.

The report also found that 70 percent of respondents believe that slowing down and living at one's own pace is crucial for personal growth and wellbeing.

Additionally, small actions such as engaging in light physical activities and spending time in nature were cited as key contributors to relaxation, confidence and optimism.

Family, friends, and community also play a critical role in sustaining a positive mindset. Sixty percent of respondents noted that giving back to the community not only benefits others but also enhances their own sense of purpose and fulfillment, said the report.

## Fragrance biz in China gives off sweet scent

MNCs develop appreciation for rising local demand, consumption upgrade

By WANG YING in Shanghai  
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China will see double-digit compound annual growth in its perfume and fragrances market in the coming five years, according to industry experts and reports.

Given China's massive population, consumption rebound and economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 era, perfume and fragrance consumption will be greatly extended, boosting the sector's growth, said a recent white paper jointly published by Hong Kong-based beauty and eyewear company Eternal Group, dsm-firmenich and Ipsos.

China's perfume market is expected to expand from 22.9 billion yuan in 2023 to 44 billion yuan (\$6.25 billion) in 2028, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14 percent over the next five years, outpacing the global average of 3.7 percent, said the report.

Despite a complex business environment, the Chinese perfume market shows vitality and unlimited potential, added the report, which predicts the global perfume retail market to grow from 709.6 billion yuan in 2023 to 841.1 billion yuan by 2028.

China will be the only major economy to see its perfume market achieve double-digit growth in the coming five years, said Chole Lam, CEO of Eternal Group, adding that the CAGR projection for the United States is 5.5 percent, and for South Korea 5.8 percent.

There is huge growth potential in China's perfume market as currently the Chinese people spend much less on perfume per capita than their peers in developed countries, Lam said.

The report expects China's perfume consumption per person will increase from 16 yuan in 2023 to 31 yuan in 2028 — still way lower than other global major markets like the US and the United Kingdom, indicating great potential.

Global market research compa-

ny Euromonitor International also said the Chinese retail fragrance market is expected to grow faster than global peers, and surge from \$2.38 billion in 2024 to \$3.67 billion in 2028.

"In comparison with the global market, the Chinese fragrance market is still in its infancy with low per capita consumption and a smaller market size. As an emerging market, it naturally contains higher potential," said Zhu Yanrui, a senior research analyst with Euromonitor International.

"Companies have shown great interest in the Chinese market, as many new brands are poised to build a presence here, and brands entering China a few years ago still maintain good performance by exploring their brand value, emotional value and consumer preferences," Zhu said.

In the future, fragrance products will shift from luxury goods to common commodities used in daily life scenarios, including personal care and household products, which ensures rapid structural growth in the fragrance market, said the white paper.

"The amount of consumers with an interest in fragrances keeps growing, and their requirements are evolving and upgrading, such as seeking better value, more refined emotional satisfaction, cultural elements and overall enjoyment," said Chen Lei, head of advisory at Ipsos, adding that brands should carry out more thorough research of target groups.

"Chinese consumers are more and more seeking fragrances with more complex and personalized requirements. As they are seeking emotional needs, higher cultural requirements and diversified consumption preferences, fragrances are consumed by broader gender and age groups of Chinese people," said Olivier Viejo, vice-president of Fine Fragrance Asia with dsm-firmenich, a Swiss-Dutch company engaged in health, nutrition and beauty innovation.

## Swiss management consultancy bullish on Chinese mkt

By WANG YING in Shanghai

Acknowledging China's critical role in its global strategy, Swiss management consulting firm dss+, formerly known as DuPont Sustainable Solutions, will expand its business in China in the coming years, said a top company executive.

"Taking advantage of our current strengths, with a team of around 100 experts in China, we are confident that we will double our business in the next few years. The Chinese market is more than just an area of growth. It is a hub for innovation and collaboration that enhances our global capabilities," said Davide Vassallo, CEO of dss+, which became independent from US-based DuPont Group in 2019.

The company is adopting a multi-pronged approach to double its growth in China by addressing the evolving needs of key heavy industries, facilitating overseas expansion and investing in talent development.

"Today the China contribution to global dss+ is in the range of 7-8 percent. We want to double this number

in the coming years because we believe that we can support Chinese companies in their international expansion," Vassallo said.

China's GDP growth of 5 percent is outstanding for any European country, Vassallo said, adding that to further tap into such a market, productivity and innovation should be given full play.

"Productivity is to release the value, and innovation is to create the value. They're two very powerful tools in this economy to continue to grow," Vassallo said, adding that their company's global nature will make dss+ a perfect partner for many Chinese enterprises.

"As China continues to promote industrialization, productivity and sustainability, companies like ours are facing tremendous opportunities," Vassallo said.

According to an IBISWorld report, with the continuous growth of the Chinese economy and increasing demand from enterprises to improve management efficiency and reduce costs, the market size of the management consulting sec-

tor is growing rapidly, providing a broad development space for management consulting firms.

The management consulting market in China is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.2 percent from 2019 to 2024, reaching an estimated \$39.2 billion by 2024, the report said.

"China's increasing focus on green transition aligns perfectly with our innovation strategy to create value through new services, products and solutions, and expand into new markets in China and internationally," said Vassallo.

The CEO said the dss+ China office is positioned not only to serve the local market, but also bridge China and other global markets. "This approach allows us to create synergies and leverage our global network to benefit our clients in China and globally."

For example, the company's China and Indonesia offices have been working closely together to support the development of the metals and mining industries. This partnership enables Chinese companies to gain

a deeper understanding of the Indonesia market and vice versa, thereby facilitating cross-border opportunities and fostering shared learning.

Vassallo said: "The best practices and insights we gained from our experience in China have not only accelerated local growth, but have been shared across our global operations. By cultivating partnerships across regions, we are able to actively help large companies navigate the current transformation, which plays an important role locally and globally towards more sustainable and efficient practices."

Looking ahead, efforts will be made focusing on industries including chemicals, steel and manufacturing, which are undergoing transformative shifts in terms of improving productivity and enhancing sustainable growth, Vassallo said.

"We have been and will continue to work alongside these industries to help advance operational efficiency, innovate with new product mixes, enhance supply chain resilience and boost agility."



Visitors try making perfume during an event in Shanghai on Sept 6. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Hebei rolling out more tourism products to lure visitors

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
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On Sunday, Tianjin resident Wang Jing embarked on a leisurely drive with her parents and child to the neighboring city of Langfang in Hebei province, eager to explore what attractions awaited them as the city was holding a gala showcasing the whole province's tourism industry.

After driving for about an hour, they arrived at the Shuiyunjian Cultural and Commercial Street in Langfang, where they witnessed a spectacular "Meat Pie Championship".

"I saw many cooks sharing the process of making their meat pies and offering them for sale. Very delicious," Wang said, adding that she and her family love to eat Xianghe Roubing, or meat pies from Xianghe

county in Langfang, which is famous for its meat pies.

They also walked around a nearby fair that showcased over 30,000 products, including cultural and creative products highlighting Hebei tourism features, clothing, household items, various daily necessities, intangible cultural heritage products and various Hebei specialty foods.

After lunch, they went to Xianghe county because she had heard that the furniture in Xianghe is very famous because of its good quality. "I wanted to see if we could find some suitable home furnishings," Wang said.

The events and places that Wang and her family visited were all part of the 8th Conference of Hebei Tourism Industry Development, which kicked off on Sunday and lasted till Tuesday, with the main venue set in

Langfang and a branch venue set in nearby Dingzhou city.

During the conference, a total of 16 events will be held at the main and branch venues, according to the hosts, including Hebei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism.

In recent years, Hebei has organized tourism galas in different provincial cities, as one of its main methods of promoting the province's tourism development.

Hebei has been ramping up efforts in tourism, Ni Yuefeng, Party secretary of the province, said at a promotional conference on Monday in Langfang.

"The province has rich historical and cultural resources, and a beautiful natural ecological environment. It boasts geographical and market advantages with a location adjacent to Beijing and Tianjin," Ni said.

"The prospects for tourism development are broad and the potential is enormous," he said.

Hebei's efforts in tourism are well reflected by a slogan it has been promoting in recent years — Close and beautiful as Hebei is, enjoy your weekends here. The slogan targets residents in neighboring Beijing and Tianjin and has had widespread influence.

During the three-day Mid-Autumn Festival holiday, the number of tourists welcomed by the entire province and the total tourism expenditure rebounded 146.1 percent and 144.3 percent, respectively, compared to levels in 2019.

Among them, the proportion of tourists from Beijing and Tianjin reached 17.2 percent, exceeding historical levels for the same period, according to a report by Hebei Daily,

quoting Hebei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism.

In March 2023, Hebei introduced a policy offering free access to expressways for tourist charter buses during weekends and holidays. Since then, more than 1.5 million tourist charter buses have traveled for free on the expressways to tour the province. The accumulated waived toll fees amount to 240 million yuan (\$34 million), with an average waiver of 154 yuan per vehicle per trip, according to Hebei Provincial Department of Transport.

Ni said Hebei will enrich its supply of high-quality tourism products and launch a series of distinctive tourism routes to develop its cities as high-quality tourist destinations.

In addition to attracting tourists from neighboring areas, Hebei is also enhancing its inbound tour-

“The province (Hebei) has rich historical and cultural resources, and a beautiful natural ecological environment. It boasts geographical and market advantages with a location adjacent to Beijing and Tianjin.”

Ni Yuefeng, Party secretary of Hebei

ism services, aiming to attract more international visitors to Hebei, according to the Hebei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism.

# BUSINESSFOCUS

## CHINA UP-CLOSE

# Sporting goods go beyond fun and games

Fujian companies ride tide of fitness equipment exports due to influence of major sports events

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou

Opportunities are growing for fitness equipment exporters in Xiamen, East China's Fujian province, fueled by a fitness craze that has been further boosted by the recent summer Olympic Games in Paris.

The 2024 Games sparked widespread fitness interest and encouraged more consumers to learn of new and more scientific ways of exercising, driving the growth of more customized fitness equipment, industry players said.

For quite some time, Xiamen has been playing a critical role in China's fitness equipment manufacturing sector. As Asia's largest production and export base for sports, fitness and massage therapy equipment, Xiamen has seen a mushrooming of advanced sporting goods makers, according to the local government.

From January to July, the export value of sporting goods and related equipment originating in Fujian reached 7 billion yuan (\$992 million), up 15.41 percent year-on-year, said Xiamen Customs.

In particular, the export value of such products to North America hit 3.13 billion yuan, surging 17.19 percent. Exports to emerging markets such as Latin America, Africa and the Middle East also witnessed significant growth over the previous year, the Customs department said.

"Fitness equipment is mainly exported via maritime transport from Xiamen Port, while some products are also transported by air, road and rail," said Zheng Yajun, a Customs official in Jitong, which administers Jimai and Tong'an districts in Xiamen.

"Among Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership member states, Laos, Singapore and Malaysia stand as the three countries that have seen the highest year-on-year growth rates in the import value of fitness-related goods and equipment from Fujian," Zheng said.

RCEP is a trade deal among 15 Asia-Pacific nations that will help lower or eliminate tariffs and establish rules on trade and investment.

Over the seven-month period, the export value of sports equipment from Fujian to RCEP member countries rose 31.03 percent year-on-year to 1.62 billion yuan, while the export of fitness equipment to countries and regions in Asia reached 1.84 billion yuan, growing 34.61 percent, according to Xiamen Customs.

Thanks to a favorable industrial environment, coupled with strong research and development abilities of enterprises, Xiamen's exports of sports and fitness-related products have been leading in the province and gained recognition from consumers.



Workers assemble stationary bikes at the factory of Xiamen K-Power Sports Co Ltd in Fujian province in May 2020. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Overseas-bounded sporting goods are loaded onto a truck in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, in October 2021. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Private enterprises have been leading the export business. During the seven-month period, the export of fitness products and equipment by private enterprises from Fujian came in at 3.53 billion yuan, jumping 47.16 percent on a yearly basis, Xiamen Customs said.

Xiamen K-Power Sports Co Ltd, a major exporter of fitness products in Xiamen, mainly exports goods to Europe, North America and South-

east Asia. Its export business accounts for 70 percent of the company's total business.

In addition, the company's domestic sales make up about 30 percent of the total, and sales in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Beijing have been robust, it said. Besides offline sales, the firm also operates online stores on major e-commerce platforms such as JD and Tmall.

The manufacturer produces 10 major categories of fitness equipment, including more than 600 varieties for both household and commercial use.

Its aerobic equipment includes fitness bikes, elliptical machines, spinning bikes, treadmills, rowing machines and step machines. Anaerobic equipment includes professional strength building-related equipment for middle-aged

and senior consumers.

"Compared with local products overseas, our products boast higher quality and more reasonable prices. We basically export products to overseas agents and they will sell them locally, mainly to gyms," said Wei Qifan, special assistant to the general manager of Xiamen K-Power Sports.

"This year, we have seen higher export volumes of products to Europe, North America and Australia, and we mainly target the gym community. In particular, sales of stair climbers, commercially used exercise bikes and rowing machines jumped 5 to 10 percent year-on-year," Wei said.

Wei added that it's important for the company to maintain its client base and foster more new customers, and it will make more efforts to boost domestic and international sales simultaneously.

Meanwhile, Xiamen Xinkai Composite Materials Technology Co Ltd, a contract processing firm that helps manufacture products for renowned global firms, said all of its products, such as carbon fiber tennis rackets, have been exported overseas.

Leveraging the combined positive impact of multiple major sports events such as the Paris Olympics, the French Open and the Wimbledon championships, the company expects order volumes of its products — such as tennis rackets, bicycles and other sports products — to increase in the latter half.

Tennis has garnered wider attention in China after Chinese tennis player Zheng Qinwen made history by defeating Croatia's Donna Vekic



This year, we have seen higher export volumes of products to Europe, North America and Australia, and we mainly target the gym community."

Wei Qifan, special assistant to the general manager of Xiamen K-Power Sports

and clinching the gold medal for women's singles at the Paris Olympic Games.

Xiamen Xinkai said that thanks to the huge popularity of the rising tennis star, the company believes that playing tennis is expected to become more commonplace in China, which will help drive sales of tennis rackets.

"We are bullish on the sales growth potential of tennis rackets in China, but we don't have plans to expand production capacity for now," said Chen Lizhan, manager of the management department at Xiamen Xinkai.

Tongda Smart Tech (Xiamen) Co Ltd, another manufacturer of sporting goods in Xiamen, has also seen its export business grow. The company's products cover more than 40 categories such as jump ropes, silicone water bottles, ice skates and archery gear.

Besides developing organically, the company cooperates with French sporting goods retailer Decathlon to jointly develop and design some products such as blue-tooth intelligent jumping ropes, grips, luminous and windproof badminton equipment, and other products popular among consumers.

In the first quarter, the export value of sporting goods and equipment from Tongda Smart Tech jumped by 46 percent year-on-year, the company said.

In response to this year's growing export volume of fitness-related products, local Customs bureaus have established a specialized services counter to help resolve related issues. Xiamen Customs said it has continued to optimize its daily 24-hour appointment services for Customs clearance, and helped exporters achieve on-demand inspections upon arrival.

In addition, Xiamen Customs has launched various explanatory sessions for domestic companies to help them boost exports.

"Customs officials have introduced China's preferential trade agreement policies with other countries and regions to help guide domestic fitness equipment manufacturers clear Customs smoothly and enhance their competitiveness in exporting," Zheng of Xiamen Jitong Customs said.

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## Chinese medalists create golden sponsorship deals

By ZHU WENQIAN

The latest generation of young Chinese athletes have been sought after by major enterprises for sponsorship deals, with gold medalists' commercial value reaching new peaks after the recently completed Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Such sponsorships have helped companies garner more brand cachet after the global sporting extravaganza. In fact, major brands began to sign cooperation deals with athletes of different sports even before the Games got underway, as companies aim to seize the significant marketing opportunities from the competitions.

One of the most noteworthy cases is the bet made by various brands on Chinese tennis player Zheng Qinwen, after she clinched a gold for China in women's singles at the Paris Games.

Even before the opening ceremony, Zheng signed cooperation deals with nearly 10 major brands, covering a wide range of sectors such as

sports, luxury products, cosmetics, finance companies and catering firms. These include Nike, Lancome, dairy group Yili, vitamin brand Swisse, McDonald's and Rolex.

According to Forbes rankings of the world's Top 20 highest-paid female athletes in 2023, Zheng ranked 15th with total earnings of \$7.2 million, including \$1.7 million in tournament prize money and \$5.5 million from sponsorship deals. Zheng became the second Chinese tennis player to make the list after retired two-time Grand Slam winner Li Na.

The sports agency behind Zheng is New York-based IMG, which has also signed deals with Chinese athletes such as freestyle skier Eileen Gu, men's big air champion Su Yiming as well as Li Na.

In previous Olympics, Chinese athletes of table tennis, swimming, diving, gymnastics and shooting have been favored by brands for sponsorship deals, industry experts said.

"The commercial value of athletes is mainly reflected in commercial sponsorship deals. If athletes would like to achieve higher commercial value, it is necessary for them to continuously refresh records to maintain frequent exposure," said Zhang Shule, an independent internet sector analyst.

"The Olympic Games attract high global attention as a comprehensive international sporting event. Gold medalists usually draw attention from wide audience groups, including those who are not fans of a particular sport," Zhang said.

Zhang added that the Olympics make it easier for athletes to gain global attention and recognition. This makes the commercial value of gold medalists exponentially different from winners of specialized competitions like world championships or regional comprehensive events such as the Asian Games.

This year, China's online travel agency Trip.com Group signed sponsorship deals with four male

Chinese athletes before the Paris Olympic Games, including record-breaking swimmer Pan Zhanle, and it turned out the company made a good investment.

Pan signed cooperation deals with multiple brands before the Games, with companies covering sectors such as personal care, tourism, foodstuffs and autos.

Trip.com said it projected that Pan would be the world's fastest swimmer after the company saw his outstanding performance during the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023.

"Compared with table tennis and diving, swimming usually garners greater global attention and generates greater influence, thus leading us to sign the sponsorship deal with Pan," said Ding Lu, general manager of brand integrated marketing at Trip.com.

"Compared with other fields, sports stars can better represent the positive image of a country. Regularly, we won't adjust the price of sponsorship deals based on the result of gold, silver or



Visitors gather at Ant Group's booth behind a cutout of Chinese tennis player Zheng Qinwen, the company's sports ambassador, during a high-tech services expo in Shanghai on Sept 7. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

bronze medals won," Ding said.

Ding added that some consumer product makers usually have higher budgets when signing sponsorship deals with athletes, and they may choose to cooperate with the whole national team of a particular sport. Companies may consider several

elements of athletes when deciding on endorsement deals. Those elements include age, appearance, historic competition results, if the particular sport category attracts global attention, and if the athlete garners enough attention on social media platforms.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## China playing its part in galvanizing of collective efforts to build a better world

Foreign Minister Wang Yi has met with multiple foreign leaders and officials in New York over the past two days on the sidelines of the United Nations Summit of the Future, expounding on China's pro-peace and pro-development message that he delivered in his speech at the summit on Monday.

In these bilateral meetings, the foreign leaders and officials have invariably expressed their countries' willingness to strengthen communication with China and deepen economic and trade cooperation with it, to not only keep the healthy development of bilateral ties on the right track but also jointly contribute to global peace, stability and common development.

The positive responses of foreign leaders and senior officials to Wang's call for promoting cooperation, exchanges and development all indicate the strategic significance the international community attaches to the responsible role China plays in these regards, as well as the fact that peace and development remain the defining themes of the times.

The summit and following general assembly of the UN that Wang will also attend provide all peace-loving countries with a platform to inject positive energy into international relations at a time when the world is being roiled by the increasing uncertainties and risks caused by the United States' resorting to protectionism and a cliquish approach to shore up its hegemony. To this end, it has sabotaged international solidarity to address common challenges, instigated the flare-up of some hotspot issues, and destabilized the global industry and supply chains.

As Wang stressed in his speech, in stark contrast, China has proposed the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and put forward the Belt and Road Initiative and the global initiatives on development, security and civilization. These are the practical means to address the four deficits — governance deficit, trust deficit, development deficit and peace deficit — that have provided fertile ground in which the seeds planted by the US in its anxiety have taken root. China upholds fairness and justice in international relations, peaceful coexistence and mutual learning among civilizations and win-win cooperation among countries.

As Wang stressed, countries need to work together to build a future of peace and tranquility. "Greater solidarity and cooperation of the international community is not a choice, but a must." To this end, he called on countries to uphold the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and settle disputes through dialogue, resolve differences through consultation, and enhance security through cooperation. In a rebuke to the US and some of its allies, he said that major countries, in particular, should lead by example, calling on them to pursue the greater good, rise above bloc confrontation with a broad vision for mutual prosperity, and serve as propellers for world solidarity and anchors for world peace.

Presenting China's prescription for the world's ills, he said that countries need to adhere to a people-centered development philosophy and universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, so as to deliver the fruits of development to all people and ensure common prosperity for all countries. And he cautioned that "a winner-takes-all approach is a sure way to lose the whole game", and adopting a "small yard with high fences" approach will only "imprison the builder and tear the world apart".

He reaffirmed China's principled position as a responsible member of the international community — in which "all countries, regardless of their size and strength, are equal members" — emphasizing the need to defend the integrity of the UN system and strengthen the authority of UN international rule of law and to reject the law of the jungle where the strong bully the weak. China is now going all out to realize its goal of becoming a modern socialist country in all respects. In this endeavor, it will undoubtedly create new opportunities for world peace and development, and provide ways in which countries can join hands to implement the Pact for the Future, aimed at building a better world for all, which was adopted at the summit.

## Use of force undermines Israel's security

At least 492 people, including 35 children and 58 women, have reportedly been killed, and more than 1,600 wounded in Israel's air strikes on alleged Hezbollah targets in Lebanon on Monday. That made it the deadliest day in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006.

Some claim that the air strikes, along with those on alleged Hezbollah members via pagers and walkie-talkies that reportedly killed dozens and wounded thousands, have pushed the militant group into the biggest crisis it has faced in four decades.

But more likely than not this is merely another escalation in the seemingly endless death loop of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. As the violent exchange is closely tied to the Israeli military offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the current exchanges of fire may not end until peace is restored in the Palestinian enclave.

Both Israel and the Hezbollah said this only marks the start of a new stage in their conflict. Israel is determined to push its offensive into the Bekaa Valley in northeast Lebanon, which is believed to be a Hezbollah stronghold. While Hezbollah leaders have openly said they will not stop until there is a cease-fire in Gaza. Considering both sides' apparent obsession with the bloodspilling logic of strike and counterstrike, however, neither should expect accomplishing its goal without paying a hefty price.

Israel's purpose may seem easily achievable — to diminish Hezbollah's ability to fire rockets and missiles across the Lebanon-Israel border, to push Hezbollah fighters back from the frontier, and to destroy the military infrastructure used by Hezbollah to attack Israeli communities. But even if it realizes these objectives, it will hardly suffice to create lasting peace for its vast border regions. Unlike Hamas, Hezbollah can find cover across Lebanon. Not to mention the militant organization is far bigger and better equipped than its Hamas sibling. Let alone its close connection and coordination with Israel's other foes in the region, including Iran and its proxies. Since the Oct 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, both Iran and Houthi forces in Yemen have launched sporadic strikes on Israeli targets. Hezbollah has claimed it is attacking in response to Israel's military operations in Gaza. In spite of Israel's belief that it is quite close to the set goal of eliminating Hamas, the truth is there will be no complete success — since Hamas elements are scattered across the area. So are the other anti-Israel forces.

Like the conflict in Gaza, Israel's objectives in its offensive against Hezbollah won't be quickly achieved. And that may prove damaging to the Israelis, too. Israel's campaign against Hamas began with considerable international sympathy, but it soon became a target of international condemnation thanks to the growing humanitarian crisis its military action has precipitated in Gaza. The same will be true of its ongoing strikes on Hezbollah.

As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials conceded, they were bombing civilian infrastructure used by the militia to hide rockets, missiles, launchers and drones. They are not sure about the "secondary" damage to civilian lives. Considering the way militia forces in the region blend themselves into local communities, the way the current Israeli offensive is executed no doubt carries huge humanitarian risks. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli and Lebanese civilians have been displaced in the present round of violence. As the conflict drags on, countless more will be.

In a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart in New York on Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated Beijing's resolute opposition to "indiscriminate attacks targeted at civilians", citing the pager attacks, and he strongly condemned Israel's Monday air strikes, which he said "violated the basic principles of international relations".

"Countering violence with violence will not solve the problems in the Middle East and will only lead to an even greater humanitarian disaster." He again called for implementing the "two-state solution" for Palestine as a precondition for lasting peace in the region.

In other words, the mutual hostility between Israel and its regional foes has to be addressed as an organic whole.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Jump in India's gold imports a means to bolster government

India's gold imports hit a record high of \$10.06 billion in August, more than six times the gold India's central bank bought last year, data released by the Indian government show.

The prime reason for this is India lowered its import duty on gold from 15 percent to 6 percent at the end of July, as part of its efforts to curb gold smuggling. It is estimated that about one-third of the world's gold output goes to India every year, the lion's share going to the private sector. The cut in import duty on gold coincided with the then approaching rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, prompting a gold-buying spree in India in August.

India's massive jump in gold imports may also be aimed at bolstering the Narendra Modi government, which entered its third term in June. The Modi government is on a mission to vigorously boost India's infrastructure capacity, with a planned investment of 44.4 trillion

rupees (\$531.25 billion), which is equivalent to the total investment in infrastructure over the past 10 years. The enormous infrastructure construction plan raises financing needs, but India's inward foreign investment this year has plummeted to \$2.6 billion, far from the average annual FDI inflow of \$40 billion between 2000 and 2022.

The decline of foreign investment in India is closely related to India's business environment, which has been called a "graveyard of foreign investment" in recent years. On the other hand, a series of measures adopted by the Modi government in 2016 to crack down on illegal fund flows has weakened the trust in the rupee, and the recent sharp fluctuations in the rupee's exchange rate have also added outside doubts to the Indian economy. In this context, the massive rise in gold imports has the intention of stabilizing the rupee's exchange rate and

underpinning Modi's infrastructure construction initiative.

To promote the internationalization of the rupee, India's central bank launched the rupee settlement mechanism for international trade less than five months after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, taking advantage of Western sanctions against the Russian ruble to buy large amounts of Russian oil in rupees. India has also actively promoted a conditional BRICS settlement mechanism.

All these initiatives, however, have not yielded the expected results, instead stoking suspicion and countermeasures from the United States. On Sept 6, the US announced sanctions against two Indian shipping companies over imports of Russian liquefied natural gas. In a sense, India's gold-buying spree could be aimed at mollifying some Western countries such as the US.

-- BEIJING NEWS

## DPP's cyber front nothing but a damp squib

The Chinese mainland's national security ministry said on Monday that a Taiwan military-backed hacking group called Anonymous 64 has been carrying out cyberattacks against targets in China. It urged people to report "anti-propaganda sabotage".

"We advocate that netizens should not believe in or spread rumors and should promptly report cyberattacks or cases of anti-propaganda activity to the national security authorities," the ministry said in a blog post.

The security ministry published screenshots of the group's X account with heavily redacted text. It also said it had opened a case against three members of Taiwan's cyber warfare

wing. Taiwan island's "defense ministry" responded by claiming Beijing's accusations were "untrue".

Anonymous 64 registered accounts on social networking sites in order to attack websites on the mainland. However, it did a clumsy job, managing to attack mostly websites which had few visitors. Some of the few "achievements" they could boast of were achieved by photoshopping the images of pages they visited.

On Aug 2, when the website of a small internet enterprise on the mainland suffered a cyberattack, Anonymous 64 claimed it had "controlled online forums of 40 mainland colleges", but that was because the website itself

was linked to those 40 colleges.

Anonymous 64, as well as the 1450 Internet Army, which was so nicknamed because the Democratic Progressive Party authorities' "agricultural committee" set a budget of 14.50 million NTD (\$452,640) in 2019 to recruit staff with the intention of "strengthening information response", which have proved to be a total waste of manpower and money.

In June 2017 the DPP authorities founded the "Information, Communications and Electronic Force Command" as the "fourth branch" of the island's "armed forces". This was further incorporated under the "ministry of defense" in 2022.

-- ZHANG ZHOULIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Strong pillar of support for Sino-ASEAN relations

Malaysia's King Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, who returned from a four-day trip to China on Sunday, said his visit was a "success". The king also expressed amazement at China's rise on the international scene in the last 20 years.

"The country has good examples for us to follow in the effort to restore Malaysia after the last few challenging years," said the king, as quoted in the New Straits Times.

Sultan Ibrahim's visit to China is the first by a Malaysian king in 10 years, marking a significant moment for both nations as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

"The good relationship between Malaysia and China is based on trust and respect which enables close cooperation in almost all sectors," he said. "I hope the government will examine the results of this visit and take appropriate measures in the areas discussed including education, trade, investment as well as transport and connectivity."

China and Malaysia enjoy a time-honored friendship. Over the past 50 years, China and Malaysia have always been on friendly terms and supported each other, setting a fine example of mutual achievements and win-win cooperation among countries.

China is willing to maintain close high-level exchanges with Malaysia and enhance strategic communication. And China is ready to better synergize development strategies with Malaysia, carry out high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, implement key projects, step up agriculture and poverty reduction cooperation, and further tap the potential of cooperation in new energy, the digital economy and other high-tech industries.

The two sides agreed to support each other on issues involving their respective core interests and major concerns. China supports Malaysia in assuming the rotating presidency of Association of Southeast Asian Nations next year, and is willing to work with Malaysia to promote East Asian cooperation and regional economic integration, and enhance coordination regarding major hotspot and international issues.

With some external forces trying to drive a wedge between China and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the healthy development of Sino-Malaysian relations should serve as a reference to the development of China-ASEAN ties. Since the China-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership was established in 2021, significant progress has been achieved in advancing the China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

The 21st China-ASEAN Expo is being held in Nanning, the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, from Tuesday to Saturday. The two sides should seize the opportunities in a new era defined by the sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation, leverage their complementary advantages, accelerate coordinated development, and jointly foster new quality productive forces in the region, so as to add new strength to the momentum of development and rejuvenation for individual countries in the region, bring forth fresh impetus to regional stability and prosperity, and make new contributions to building an even closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

-- LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Josef Gregory Mahoney

## People's congresses play vital role

Since 2012 Chinese top leader Xi Jinping has reminded officials and other leaders of their noble beginnings while highlighting the importance of the "mass line". From the people and to the people, serving the people, and the people governing themselves — these principles have always been the cornerstone of Chinese-style democracy. These principles continue to evolve and develop in tandem with China's pursuit of national rejuvenation and promotion of whole-process people's democracy.

From the perspective of dialectical materialism, how can we understand the democratic qualities of China's political system? We can cite a number of empirical findings to help people understand those qualities. For example, an astounding 85 percent of the Chinese people trust their government to make the right decisions. This trust stems in part from the remarkable achievements the government has already made, including lifting more than 800 million people out of poverty, eradicating extreme poverty, advancing regional equality, vitalizing the countryside, expanding the middle-income group, helping increase life expectancy, creating the world's most advanced industrial and infrastructure systems, and leading the world in green innovation and development.

Another achievement is China's return to the world stage as a major power and peacemaker, and making efforts to establish a multipolar world order, strengthening security, and boosting global development.

The above achievements are the actualization of Chinese-style democracy. And yet the essence of Chinese-style democracy is something deeper. More fundamentally, it's the Chinese people, the oldest and one of the most diverse peoples in history, coming together in unity and ruling themselves for their own good. Without this, neither the achievements nor the satisfaction would be possible.

More to the point, as the National People's Congress celebrates the 70th anniversary of its founding, it is important to acknowledge the vital role the people's congress system has played in making the Chinese political system so effective and conducive to delivering good governance.

Many foreign, especially Western, observers misunderstand Chinese-style democracy, because they have a deep distrust of socialism, consider non-Western-style democracy as an aberration, have a strong sense of superiority and thus look down upon China's whole-process people's democracy.

In the past, many people could not understand Chinese-style democracy because in the early decades of the People's Republic, China considered it unnecessary to explain its political system to the world. But for many years now, China has been telling its story well to the outside world. Still, not much seems to have changed. In fact, the more democratic, the more successful, the more promising the Chinese political system becomes, the more some Western politicians and media hate it.

Western politicians, media and observers are more than happy to accept non-Western political systems as long as those systems serve Western strategic and economic interests. That's why countries such as the United States continue to embrace countries with different political systems and regimes, including military dictatorships, theocracies and monarchies, and meddle in the internal affairs of other countries, including democracies, fomenting coups, triggering "color revolutions" and exploiting the vulnerabilities of weaker nations. Ironically, Western powers indulge in these Machiavellian acts in the name of promoting democracy.

If we assess the US' motives for denigrating China's polit-

ical system and reasons for aggressively pushing forward its China-containment strategy, we will realize they have very little to do with democracy, human rights or social justice. Instead, it marks a return to "Sinophobia," which first surfaced in the West during the time of Marco Polo, when China was a major power, and which has now returned again as China has again stepped to the forefront of nations, especially as Western powers experience declines.

The remarkable achievements of Chinese-style democracy contrasted with the economic, social and political failures in the West have exposed the inadequacy of Western-style democracy. This contributes to their fear and resentment. What they can't face is the possibility that China is more democratic than they are, in both domestic and foreign policy. And yet, most Americans today don't believe their system is truly democratic, and increasingly the French and the British among many others are thinking the same things about themselves.

Perhaps Western countries have regressed in the digital age, thanks to the social fragmentation and political polarization. This could be described as the contextual jousiance of contemporary Western democracies: political spectacles, which long ago stopped offering

constituents substantial policy choices or realistic visions for the future.

Perhaps this has led to social decay and what can be described as "terror of the self", a terror that is externalized and projected on other countries and people. It includes the loss of subject identity and cultural roots, inducing a grave sense of danger.

Perhaps the Western powers feel a "slight coolness on the neck", as the inventor of the guillotine once described the final sensation before losing one's head. This is a type of political terror, a pathology rooted in Western development and modernization paths, which have passed through colonialism, genocide, slavery, theft and continued suppression, which have little in common with Chinese-style democracy — because under Chinese-style democracy, people keep their heads and wits and move forward together to build a community with a shared future.

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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Zhu Songling

## The perils of reviving a false Taiwan narrative

The narrative of "Taiwan's status being undetermined" is being fueled anew by both "Taiwan independence" forces and their Western backers. The false narrative of "Taiwan's status being undetermined", despite being buried in the dustbin of history, is now being used by anti-Beijing elements as a tool to further their sinister political agenda.

By reigniting this false narrative, the anti-China forces seek to unravel the fact that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, and to smear national reunification as an act of the Chinese mainland's aggression. Their aim is clear: to garner international sympathy for "Taiwan independence" while creating the false impression that Beijing is the aggressor.

The motivations behind this revived narrative are dangerous. The Taiwan separatists and their Western supporters seek to use this narrative to reshape global perceptions, argue that the reunification of Taiwan with the motherland is an act of aggression, and justify foreign interference in the Taiwan question. This reckless challenge to the foundation of cross-strait relations has become the greatest risk to peace across the Strait.

Western politicians backing "Tai-

wan independence" have calculated their moves carefully, viewing the Taiwan question as a strategic opportunity to halt the mainland's reunification efforts and curb its rise. These forces, which for long have been trying to interfere in the Taiwan question, are determined to prevent national reunification by fueling the "Taiwan status being undetermined" narrative. Their real goal is to stymie the mainland's growth.

Those Western backers of "Taiwan independence" are fully aware that the Taiwan question is at the heart of China's core interests. Yet while claiming to uphold the one-China principle that there is only one China, their actions tell a different story. By subtly hollowing out the core of this principle, they are trying to push the two sides of the Strait closer to conflict. Their Cold War mentality prompts them to view China as the main threat to Western, especially US, hegemony. Using the "undetermined" status as a geopolitical weapon, they aim to undermine China's sovereignty over Taiwan and paint a false picture of territorial uncertainty.

This calculated move to trigger trouble across the Strait is not just about damaging Beijing's international image — it's also about entangling it in a prolonged conflict

with the aim of weakening its strategic capabilities. By raising tensions, they are trying to create a pretext for their military build-up and intervention in the Taiwan question, using Taiwan as a pawn in their broader geopolitical game.

For their part, "Taiwan independence" forces are using the "Taiwan status being undetermined" narrative to weaken the long-standing 1992 Consensus. People such as Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te are openly pushing new, divisive rhetoric, with the "undetermined status" narrative forming the backbone of their argument. They seek to mislead the international community, garner sympathy for "Taiwan independence" forces and portray Taiwan as a victim of the mainland's aggression.

Their strategy involves distorting history, twisting facts and violating international law. By promoting the idea that the Taiwan question is unresolved, they are trying to create the illusion of the mainland as an invader. But in doing so, they are not only exacerbating internal divisions in Taiwan but also creating a dangerous narrative that threatens stability across the Strait.

Their goal is to pave the way for the "legal independence" of Taiwan through this manufactured narrative. Such efforts to garner global support come at the high price of

destabilizing the fragile balance between Taiwan and the mainland, and increasing the chances of conflict.

The spread of the "Taiwan status being undetermined" narrative by both the "Taiwan independence" forces and their Western backers is a calculated strategy. Their ultimate goal is to weaken the global consensus on the one-China principle and overturn UN Resolution 2758, which affirmed China's sovereignty over Taiwan. Should this narrative gain more traction, the risk of a cross-strait conflict will only increase.

This is a dangerous game with serious consequences. The "Taiwan independence" forces and their Western backers are not only threatening cross-strait peace but also destabilizing the entire Asia-Pacific region.

In the face of such a challenge, it's critical that Beijing remains vigilant against any dangerous moves by the separatists on the island and their foreign backers. The "Taiwan status being undetermined" narrative is malicious but doomed to failure.

*The author is a professor at the Institute of Taiwan Studies, Beijing Union University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Ding Hongwei

## China, Japan should deepen trade cooperation for win-win results

China and Japan are the two largest economies in Asia, with China being Japan's largest trading partner for more than a decade, and Japan being China's second-largest trading partner, and both countries have been beneficiaries of and advocates for economic globalization and free trade.

Japanese companies were the first to enter the Chinese market after the latter launched the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, and have developed together with the Chinese economy.

According to the Japan External Trade Organization, more than 56,000 Japanese enterprises are operating in China, with their cumulative investment being more than \$130 billion, the second highest among all foreign economies. The return on investment for Japanese companies in China is about 15 percent, much higher than those in North America, the European Union and ASEAN member states.

To be sure, Japanese companies have made great contributions to the Chinese economy; they have created jobs, shared their management experience and technologies, and facilitated the development of local enterprises. The two countries' industrial cooperation has transformed from labor-intensive to technology-intensive partnership in sectors such as automobiles, machinery, electronic devices and information and communications technology (ICT) products.

On the other hand, Chinese investment in Japan is growing despite being a latecomer in this regard. China and Japan also play important roles in safeguarding multilateralism and free trade.

Japan's 2024 White Paper on International Economy and Trade says the country had signed 21 economic cooperation agreements with 50 countries as of March 2024, with free trade agreements and other trade and investment agreements accounting for 80 percent of Japan's total trade volume — higher than those for the US and the EU.

With the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, China and Japan established their first free trade relationship. Representing about 30 percent of global GDP and one-third of the world's population, the RCEP member states also account for about 50 percent of Japan's total trade volume. As such, the RCEP agreement will make regional trade more resilient and efficient, promote investment, optimize market access mechanisms, strengthen intellectual property rights laws and facilitate e-commerce, thus boosting China-Japan trade.

**China and Japan have their respective advantages in industries and technologies, and the continuous upgrading of their cooperation yields win-win results.**

Also, people-to-people exchanges and investment in retail services are increasing between the two countries. For example, the number of tourists visiting Japan in July increased by 41.9 percent year-on-year to more than 3.29 million, hitting a second-straight monthly high, the Japan National Tourism Organization said in August — with visitors from the Chinese mainland surging by 147.8 percent, the highest among all countries.

China and Japan have their respective advantages in industries and technologies, and the continuous upgrading of their cooperation yields win-win results. For instance, Japan has advantages in high-end manufacturing such as precision machinery, electronic components, auto parts and robotics, while China is known for its large-scale production capacity and cost effectiveness, and supplying them to the market.

Besides, the close connection between upstream and downstream industries makes China-Japan industry chains highly competitive in the global market. Japanese companies belong to the high value-added upstream category in the global supply chain, and excel in high-end material and special equipment manufacturing, while Chinese enterprises have a strong advantage in processing, assembling and manufacturing in the downstream industry chain.

Japan is a leader in technology-intensive industries such as semiconductors, precision instruments and medical equipment, and China's advantage lies in the service industries including e-commerce, logistics and financial technology, and applying R&D results to commercial use. No wonder the two sides seek to deepen cooperation in fields such as intelligent manufacturing and smart city construction.

China has learned many things from Japan, with the two sides jointly promoting innovation. Since signing the intergovernmental agreement on science and technology cooperation in 1980, China and Japan have established all-round, multi-channel cooperation in fields such as agriculture, environmental protection, meteorology, pharmaceuticals, electronics, machinery, ICT, energy, automobiles and research into "new infectious diseases".

The two countries have also established scientific research platforms, and employ ICT to boost exchanges between their industry- and university-affiliated research institutes. As a matter of fact, China has been pursuing innovation-driven high-quality development, which has created new opportunities for Chinese companies to gain competitive advantage in the global market.

The supply chains of the two countries are intertwined thanks to their complementary economies. However, Japan enacted the Economic Security Protection Act in 2022, in order to reduce, if not end its dependency on some countries for certain products, because it sees the dependency as a supply chain risk. By imposing export restrictions on certain products in the name of safeguarding "economic security", Japan has violated the rules of globalization and free trade.

And the Japanese government's direct intervention in trade activities and its directive to Japanese companies to adjust their supply chains have disrupted the industry and supply chains. Therefore, China and Japan should deepen their economic and technological cooperation and contribute to regional and global development. Also, China has reaffirmed its determination to push forward reform and opening-up, which should boost the confidence of foreign companies.

The White Paper on the Chinese Economy and Japanese Companies 2024 issued by the Japan Chamber of Commerce in China shows that 54 percent of Japanese companies were very satisfied or satisfied with the business environment in China, while 51 percent said China is "the most important market" or "one of the three most important markets".

Moreover, due to the depreciation of the yen, Japan has been getting larger returns on its overseas investment. So the two sides should take measures to use their respective advantages to deepen cooperation in the digital economy, green development and third-party markets, maintain the stability of their industry and supply chains, and boost global free trade, because strengthened China-Japan economic cooperation will not only boost bilateral relations but also expedite regional economic integration.

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# GLOBAL VIEWS

GETACHEW ENGIDA

## Development at the double

Knowledge and skills will be among the most significant determinants of Africa's future

The 2024 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was successfully completed with a consensus declaration released by the People's Republic of China and 53 African countries. The declaration affirmed the commitment to building an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the 21st century and beyond. Discussions at the summit covered multifaceted and critical global challenges including global governance, security, peaceful coexistence, the promotion and protection of human rights, inclusive economic globalization with reformed international financial and trade systems, and climate change.



China and Africa firmly believe that sustainable development must be people-centered. For the successful transition to a fair and equitable world, development initiatives must focus on the youth. We need to foster mutual understanding between peoples, particularly the youth, if we are to build inclusive, knowledge societies. Young people everywhere must be taught to be global citizens and be aware of and respect diverse cultures and belief systems. Understanding each other's ways will help foster friendly relations and mutually beneficial arrangements for the benefit of all.

Beyond economic development projects, the Belt and Road Initiative and the FOCAC have allowed exchanges between African and Chinese youth through cultural visits and educational exchanges. The annual meeting of the exchange mechanism of the China-Africa University Alliance is one example. This year's meeting attracted 35

universities from 19 African countries as well as 50 universities from China. This is commendable and encouraging. More, of course, needs to be done including leadership training as in the efforts of the China-Africa Leadership Development Institute (CALDI) at Tsinghua University.

Today Africa stands at the dawn of a new era — now is the moment for Africa's renaissance to accelerate as Africa begins to realize the opportunities that the 21st century offers its people. That reality is not possible without education — a transformed education that enables every African child and adult to have the skills and competencies to successfully navigate our ever-changing world.

Fifty years ago, the first 33 independent African states took a landmark decision to form the Organization of African Unity. Its successor is the African Union. The AU's Agenda 2063 — the Africa We Want — is a blueprint that makes it clear that the destiny of Africa is in our hands, and that we must act now to shape the future we want.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

It is important for us to recognize that our strength is in unity and to share our homegrown solutions to overcome the challenges we face.

Today, technologies, smart applications and other innovations offer an opportunity to improve the lives

of all across Africa, by helping to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges that threaten our world. However, they may also be disruptive, with far-reaching effects on all aspects of our lives.

Clearly, knowledge and skills will

be among the most significant determinants of the success of our efforts to deliver on the promise of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Not surprisingly, education stands at the heart of both — as a basic human right, as a transformational force for poverty eradication, as the engine for sustainability and as a force for dialogue and peace.

This is embodied in SDG 4, to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

Poverty and inequality undermine society and economies just as much as a lack of infrastructure or investment.

Africa is rich in human as well as natural resources. The continent's potential lies in its dynamic population, sustained economic growth in recent years and increasingly well-established role in a multipolar global order.

However, it is vital for our full potential to be realized.

A dynamic population alone does not ensure that young people leave school educated and well trained;

even high growth does not translate into evenly distributed employment (particularly among young women); natural resources do not automatically translate to a command of industrial processes; and globalization could spell disaster if tackled without long-term vision or strategies.

These are the elements for a prosperous peaceful future for the whole continent, promoting sustainable development and peace in Africa.

As stated in the 2030 Development Agenda, truly sustainable peace and development must be inextricably linked — as one cannot be achieved without the other.

The 2015 Positive Peace Report by the Institute for Economics and Peace highlights the eight factors for sustainable peace and development: well-functioning governments; sound business environments; the equitable distribution of resources; acceptance of the rights of others; good relations with neighbors; the free flow of information; high levels of human capital and low levels of corruption. The report takes a systems approach and argues not to simply focus on the individual pillars.

We must do everything to empower present and future African generations with the necessary skills to exchange, communicate and cooperate across cultural, religious and national boundaries, to become responsible global citizens in a safer world for all.

The author is former deputy director-general of UNESCO and co-president of the China-Africa Leadership Development Institute at Tsinghua University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

XU WEI

## New model for multilateral cooperation

China-Africa ties will continue to serve as the cornerstone of South-South cooperation with its firm strategic determination

Building a China-Africa community with a shared future is not only a continuation of the traditional friendship between the two sides, but also a strategic response to the current global challenges. The Beijing Declaration on Jointly Building an All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era, adopted at the Beijing Summit



in early September, clearly states that "China and Africa will always honor the everlasting spirit of China-Africa friendship and cooperation, characterized by sincere friendship and equality, win-win for mutual benefits and common development, fairness and justice, and progress with the times and openness and inclusiveness, jointly build an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era."

The "all-weather" in this declaration highlights the resilience and long-term nature of China-Africa ties, indicating that cooperation between the two sides is not just about economic growth, but also a strategic cooperation for global governance and a new international order. This has endowed China-Africa relations with broader political connotations in the new era.

The declaration appreciates the joint release of the Africa-China Dar es Salaam Consensus, which puts forward constructive ideas on how to address current global challenges and fully consolidates the consensus and concepts of the two sides.

On Aug 27, President Xi Jinping replied to scholars from 50 African countries, encouraging them to contribute intellectual support for building a higher-level China-Africa

community with a shared future and safeguarding the common interests of the Global South.

Another outcome document of the Beijing Summit, the FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2025-27), sets specific goals for China-Africa cooperation in the next three years, especially to enhance cooperation in areas such as industrialization and modernization, agricultural modernization, green development, digital economy, education cooperation and cultural exchanges. Africa is at a critical stage of industrialization and modernization, and China has accumulated ample experience and gained technological advantages in these fields. Therefore, cooperation can promote Africa's independent development through capacity docking, technology transfer and other means.

The action plan also specifically mentions the agenda of green and sustainable development, which is in line with the Global Development Initiative. The cooperation between China and Africa in addressing climate change, protecting the ecological environment and promoting clean energy marks a gradual shift in China-Africa relations from traditional infrastructure construction and resource development to a path featuring higher quality and more sustainable growth. This not only meets the actual needs of African countries, but also demonstrates the two sides' willingness to provide solutions to common global challenges through cooperation.

It also emphasizes the exchange of think tanks and educational



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

cooperation, which is in line with China's Global Civilization Initiative. The key to having sound relations between states lies in amity between the people. The efforts to promote the construction of a China-Africa think tank cooperation network, strengthen academic exchanges and partnership, mutual learning of civilizations and cultural exchanges will effectively enhance understanding and communication between the Chinese and African peoples, and advance talent cultivation and the empowerment of women and children in

Africa, which will provide an inexhaustible source of intellectual support for Africa's modernization and independent development.

The Global Development Initiative is a key initiative proposed by China to promote global sustainable development and narrow the North-South gap. The China-Africa joint statement on deepening cooperation within the framework of the Global Development Initiative, released at the 2024 FOCAC summit, reflects the high importance that both sides attach to this initiative. The statement mentions that

China and Africa will deepen cooperation in areas such as poverty alleviation, food security, health and green development. Both sides agreed to further work closely together, especially in combating the epidemic and rebuilding the public health system.

The essence of the Global Development Initiative is to seek common development, and as Africa is the continent with the highest concentration of developing countries in the world, its development directly determines the result of the global development agenda. That China and Africa further deepen their cooperation through the Global Development Initiative is not only a precise response to Africa's development needs, but also a concrete manifestation of China's leadership role on the global development stage.

China-Africa cooperation is not only related to bilateral interests, but also an important practice of global multilateralism. Against the backdrop of accelerating adjustments in the global political landscape, it has surpassed traditional aid models and become a new paradigm of international cooperation. The content of multilateralism and global governance cooperation in the Beijing Declaration manifests the two sides' joint efforts in promoting the democratization of the international order and strengthening South-South cooperation.

The construction of the China-Africa community with a shared future emphasizes mutual support between the two sides in international affairs, especially in the United

Nations and other international organizations, China and Africa should strengthen coordination and cooperation, speak out for each other, and promote global governance in a more just and reasonable direction. This partnership will play a key role in addressing major global challenges such as climate change, epidemic disease prevention and control, and development gap in the future.

The construction of the China-Africa community with a shared future in the new era demonstrates the joint responsibility and commitment of both sides in global development and international cooperation. Through a series of documents released at the 2024 Summit of the FOCAC in Beijing, especially the Beijing Declaration and the Action Plan, China and Africa have set specific directions and goals for cooperation in the next three years, covering various fields such as politics, economy and culture. This not only reflects the high-level development of China-Africa ties, but also indicates that the relationship between the two sides will keep deepening in the changing global landscape.

As a major driving force for global development, building a China-Africa community with a shared future provides a new model for global multilateral cooperation and common development. In such an ever-changing era, China-Africa ties will continue to serve as the cornerstone of global South-South cooperation with its firm strategic determination and flexible mechanisms.

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## Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

## Z WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

## Sign for tea

On Sept 20, the popular milk tea chain Chagee opened its first "Silent Store" in Shanghai at Zhengda Joy City in Xuhui district.

In addition to a self-ordering mini app, the store is equipped with writing boards and sign language menus, allowing hearing-impaired customers to place their orders easily.

Furthermore, all staff members at the store have received professional training in sign language to ensure accurate and effective communication.

Since it's difficult for hearing-impaired individuals to find work, the store also provides employment opportunities for them.

Xu Pei, from East China's Jiangsu province, is one of the staff members at the Silent Store. Although she is hearing-impaired, she is fully capable of doing her job after receiving professional training.

"I used to hold a desk job, and there were many inconveniences at work. But with the Silent Store, not only has my salary increased, but I also feel a sense of fulfillment," she said in an interview with the Shanghai Morning Post.

To help more hearing-impaired individuals integrate into society, for every order sold at the Silent Store in Changsha, Central China's Hunan province, the company will donate 1 yuan (\$0.14) to a special welfare fund in the consumer's name, aiming to pass on the kindness and warmth.



The milk tea chain Chagee opened its first "Silent Store" in Shanghai on Sept 20. TUCHONG

## Magic in diversity

Since the announcement of the new HBO TV series *Harry Potter* last year, it has captured global attention. The series has recently opened a casting call in the UK and Ireland to find young actors for the three main characters — Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ron Weasley.

"We are currently only able to consider children who are aged 9 to 11 in April 2025," the notice read.

However, the latest casting call has sparked discussions, as the casting team specifically stated, "We are committed to inclusive, diverse casting."

The call noted that qualified performers are invited to apply for the roles "without regard to ethnicity, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other basis protected by law unless otherwise specifically indicated."

However, some netizens believe that if one truly wishes to create a diverse and inclusive work, one should tailor new scripts and productions specifically for actors of various backgrounds rather than inserting them into beloved classic stories that the public is familiar with. This approach may appear to be an easy way out for the production and investment sides.

"In partnership with Warner Bros. Television and JK Rowling, this new Max Original series will dive deep into each of the iconic books that fans have continued to enjoy for all these years," said Casey Bloys, HBO and Max CEO, when the reboot was announced last year.

Hopefully, the final product will not stray too far from everyone's collective memories and interpretations.

LI XINRAN



A poster for the 2002 movie *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## 75 years of progress in English learning

The evolution of English education in China over the decades mirrors the country's significant cultural and societal transformations.

By LI XINRAN  
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Li Hua is a name familiar to many Chinese students, especially those born in the 90s and 00s. In middle and high school English exams, students are often tasked with writing a letter to an international pen pal on behalf of Li Hua, a fictional student. Over the years, the prompt and topics of these letters have evolved, reflecting the broader changes in English education in China over the past few decades.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The country has made tremendous progress in popularizing and advancing English learning, as well as fostering cross-cultural communication.

Tian Lijun, born in the 1970s in Dalian, Liaoning province, graduated from the Communication University of China in the 90s. She was first introduced to English during her first year of middle school.

"We spent the entire first semester learning the alphabet and phonetic symbols and the second semester learning simple vocabulary," she recalled. "I had no idea that the words we were memorizing would eventually form sentences, let alone that we were learning an actual foreign language."

Tian began middle school a few years after the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978. As Dalian is a port city, the school soon included English and Japanese in the curriculum.

"Seeing the societal changes around me, I felt a strong urge to learn English," Tian said.

In the following years, English education began at earlier stages and became more engaging.

Zhang Zhibin, 44, is an elementary school English teacher in Beijing with 24 years of teaching experience. He was first introduced to the language in sixth grade. For Gen Zers like Wang Mengqi,

“With the rapid pace of knowledge updates, textbooks must timely reflect the latest research and information. Changes in curriculum standards also aim to enhance student abilities, such as critical thinking, innovation, and information literacy.”

Zhang Zhibin, an elementary school English teacher in Beijing

27, exposure to English came even before elementary school.

"In kindergarten, we had those cute textbooks where the letters were drawn in different shapes and colors, and vocabulary came with pictures," said Wang, now a high school English teacher with three years of experience in Beijing.

The classroom environment, in terms of teaching methods and technology, has also changed drastically since the 1980s. For example, Tian's first English teacher taught in Chinese, but Wang shared that she and her colleagues now encourage students to switch to an English-only mode during class.

While teachers in the 1980s and 1990s primarily relied on blackboards and, in some larger cities, outdated slide projectors, Wang noted that high school students at her school now frequently use computers in multimedia

classrooms to practice listening and speaking. Seniors even have the chance to use AI devices for speaking practice: after students read a passage, the device scores their reading, highlighting both their strengths and areas for improvement.

"I've found that students are especially attentive and engaged when we incorporate technology into the classroom," Wang said.

The improvement in Chinese students' English proficiency is not only a result of advancements in technology and classroom arrangements but also the development of textbooks and curriculum standards, which, according to Zhang, are constantly evolving to meet educational needs and reflect societal trends.

"With the rapid pace of knowledge updates, textbooks must timely reflect the latest research and information. Changes in curriculum standards also aim to enhance student abilities, such as critical thinking, innovation, and information literacy," Zhang said.

Lei Chenxiang, 17, a high school student in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, has noticed this ongoing evolution of his textbooks. "A recent international event may appear in the next printed edition of the textbook. The content is really connected to what's happening in the world," he said.

Another change in English learning is the focus of students' short essay prompts, which often feature the recurring character, Li Hua.

Wang recalled that when she was in school, essay prompts often revolved around helping Li Hua, who was about to visit a foreign country but couldn't write in English, and needed assistance drafting a letter to his foreign pen pal to ask about the local weather and customs. Nowadays, however, students are more likely to help Li Hua tell Chinese stories to his foreign friends visiting China.

Lei mentioned that his recent writing

assignments included introducing the development of traditional Chinese music and China's cultural heritage.

Wang believes this shift in essay topics is closely tied to changes in society and the growing cultural confidence of the Chinese people. "China's rising international status, along with increasing interactions with other countries, are key factors," Wang said.

She hopes that, in the future, textbooks will include more practical and engaging content. "Sections that stimulate real-life practices could be added, along with those that integrate with other subjects," Wang said. "There could also be features that spark students' interest in learning English, such as acting out English play scripts."

Feng Yunqi, a 17-year-old high school student in Beijing, wishes that schools would be more open to students using technology in the classroom.

"It would be great if schools allowed more electronic devices, such as tablets or smartphones, in class because they can really help with our studies. For example, some of my classmates use scanning pens, which instantly display the meaning of a word when scanned," he said.

Zhang believes that since English is everywhere — from labels in supermarkets to subtitles in movies, and from toy instruction manuals to greetings from international friends — we should enhance our efforts in learning English more than ever. "English is not just a subject; it is a key to the world," he said.

"If we want to engage in global communication, there are two main approaches: stepping out and inviting others in," said Feng.

"Proficiency in English is vital when interacting with people abroad, as it indicates a certain level of education. On the other hand, when international friends visit us and find that we can all speak English, it creates a positive impression and elevates our country's image and status in the world."

LIU CHANG / CHINA DAILY

## Z WEEKLY

# The power of one

The 2nd International Monodrama Festival showcases powerful solo performances from around the world, highlighting the emotional depth and cultural exchange fostered through monodrama.

By GUI QIAN  
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Three women from ancient and modern Greece embark on a "journey" together on a train: Medea, the tragic figure from ancient Greek drama, Maria Callas, the internationally renowned opera diva, and Melina Mercouri, the beloved Greek actress, singer, and politician. Despite their different life paths, they are united by a common trait: passion — for life, for love, for creativity, and for freedom.

This is the story told in the Greek play *Women of Passion, Women of Greece*. What makes it particularly unique is that all three women are portrayed by a single actress.

Through changing headresses and modifying her voice and body language, the actress vividly brings each character's distinct traits to life. In other words, it is a one-person show, or monodrama.



“In the face of so many grand productions, I wonder why we don't create something small and beautiful. Monodrama is such a vibrant art form, and I believe it deserves more of my energy.”

Li Yangdu, founder of the Drumtower West Theater



“I strive to ensure the audience doesn't leave the theater emotionally untouched, especially with a monodrama. If it fails to evoke empathy, I consider the play a failure.”

Zhang Le, a theater practitioner

From Sept 5 to Oct 13, the 2nd International Monodrama Festival is held in Beijing. Organized by the Drumtower West Theater, this year's event features 13 shows from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Denmark, Greece, and other countries and regions, as well as nine original short plays by young theater practitioners for competition.

The festival also includes workshops, expert conversations, immersive shows, and an award ceremony, making it a grand event for enjoying, promoting, and exploring this unique art form.

Li Yangdu, founder of the festival and the Drumtower West Theater, believes in the profound artistic potential of monodrama. “A monodrama can express an entire world through the power of just one person,” she said.

However, she pointed out that this art form does not receive the attention and investment it deserves, as many great playwrights today tend to focus on larger productions.

“When I travel abroad, I ask local theater professionals about the state of monodramas in their countries. The common response is that monodramas exist, but they are not prevalent,” she said. “In the face of so many grand productions, I wonder why we don't create something small and beautiful. Monodrama is such a vibrant art form, and I believe it deserves more of my energy.”

## Interconnected stories

Tatiana Ligari, director of *Women of Passion, Women of Greece*, believes that monodrama's unique charm lies in its ability to reach “something deeper in our emotion”.

This is why she thinks that the best part of this festival is its ability to allow audiences to directly experience different countries and civilizations.

“In many performances, we see good singing, good dancing, but what happens with the culture, the mind, and the soul in these countries? If we have an international monodrama festival, people can liberally discover the spirit of other countries,” she said. “I believe very much in the power of women. So, I tried to find Greek women famous in the world and speak through them.”

One of the goals of this year's festival is to allow Chinese audiences to hear the voices of creators from across the world and to facilitate exchanges and learning between Chinese theater practitioners and their global counterparts.

“Especially for young creators, it's essential not to work in isolation. They should go out more, watch more plays, and read more books. Many of the esteemed directors, like Lin Zhaohua and Stan Lai, spent significant time abroad watching numerous foreign productions before developing their unique worldviews and styles,” Li stated, expressing her hopes for the youth and her desire to support them.

The competition segment of the festival offers a valuable opportunity for young dramatists early in their careers. According to Li, two to three works will be selected and promoted, giving the creators the chance to participate in commercial performances. This exposure helps the plays attract more invitations for future shows.

“The life of any play should not be confined to a single festival; it needs to be seen by more people to gain stronger vitality,” she explained.

For example, last year's first-prize winner, the puppet monodrama *Riding Alone*, has seen significant development after continuous incubation. The play has been performed at the Edinburgh International Festival, the Daliangshan International Theater Festival, and in cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

One of the nine works in this year's competition is *Seabird*, directed and performed by Zhang Le, a 24-year-old from Hohhot in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

About a year ago, Zhang had just graduated with a degree in performing arts and was making a living by directing tourism shows. At the time, he felt somewhat dissatisfied with himself and still hoped to pursue independent creative endeavors in theater.

While rereading Russian writer Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Zhang was struck by the similarities between the young playwright Treplev and himself: “We are both poor, troubled, yet persistent,” he said. This inspired him to create his monodrama *Seabird*, in which he depicts the painful struggle young people face between reality and their ideals.

To date, Zhang has independently created six plays — all with small casts — including two two-person shows and four monodramas.

“Monodramas are almost cost-free. Nowadays, producing a play has become increasingly extravagant, often going to great lengths for so-called high-tech effects, which I find unnecessary,” he said. “I strive to ensure the audience doesn't leave the theater emotionally untouched, especially with a monodrama. If it fails to evoke empathy, I consider the play a failure.”

Reflecting on his monodramas, Zhang found that they all possess a strong philosophical core, shaped by his view of the world and concern for social issues. In addition to exploring young people's uncertainty about the future, his works address topics such as suicide, misogyny, and anti-war themes.

“Theater practitioners of our generation, myself included, live in an era of information overload. We witness countless events, and although we don't earn much, we feel a strong urge to tackle major issues and reflect on global challenges,” he said.

Shu'er (pseudonym), one of the festival's organizers, echoed Zhang's sentiments. After reviewing all the competition entries from last year and this year, she observed that young dramatists today maintain a close focus on reality, often grappling with existential questions about the meaning of life. Romantic love, she noted, is clearly no longer a major concern for young people.

“I see a lot of passionate creative energy among young people, which is a positive sign,” she said. “Some of their works are still rough and need further refinement, but it's crucial to regularly present their works to audiences and improve them based on feedback.”

Li hopes that the festival and the Drumtower West Theater can serve as platforms to support and accompany young theatrical creators.

“Whether it's helping them reach world-class festivals or attracting the attention of more producers and offering business opportunities, I believe each of them has a unique brilliance that deserves to be seen by more people,” she said.

From top to bottom: Jiao Yuan performs her monodrama, *She Came From Beijing*, at the 2nd International Monodrama Festival. XIAOXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY Evalina Arapidi (Greece) performs *Women of Passion, Women of Greece* at the festival. HAIIDIAN LANWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY Zhang Le performs *Seabird* at the festival. BAI ZIXUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



## Z WEEKLY

# From folk roots to game fame

Zhelai, the vocal artist behind a viral track for *Black Myth: Wukong*, captivates audiences worldwide with her unique and rebellious sound.

By GUI QIAN  
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As the first Chinese AAA game, *Black Myth: Wukong* has gained explosive popularity, and one of its tracks, *Pi* (which can mean both "fart" and "nonsense" in Chinese), has also garnered significant attention.

Featuring philosophical lyrics, a grand and unique musical arrangement, and distant yet powerful vocals, this song has captivated gamers, social media users, and the public alike.

Creative reinterpretations of the song are thriving, including reaction videos from foreign listeners, analyses by a 90-year-old piano-playing granny, a Cantonese cover, and even a remake music video by the Yunnan traffic police.

The original singer of *Pi*, vocal artist Zhelai (pseudonym) from Jinchang in Northwest China's Gansu province, is delighted by the enthusiasm.

"I'm not at all worried about the imagination of netizens; everyone should just enjoy the song," she said.

"Seeing people immerse themselves in this piece, I feel that each person is wonderfully talented. Every time I encounter their creations, I gain a new perspective on the song."

When Zhelai recorded *Pi* three years ago, she had no idea it would become so widely popular.

At that time, she hadn't seen any visual materials about the game and relied solely on her feelings and understanding of the lyrics and melody to deliver the unique and memorable performance we know today.

Some consider the word "pi" to be vulgar, which is why many refer to the song by its key lyrics, "three realms and four continents".

Zhelai explains that when she recorded the song, the title hadn't yet been decided. While the Buddhist concept of "three realms and four continents" does reflect the grand worldview depicted in the song, after learning more about the game's story and characters, she felt it had to be called *Pi* because "otherwise, the song would lack spirit", she said.

"*Pi* represents a fundamental human desire, something produced by the body that needs to be expelled," Zhelai explained. "It also captures a rebellious attitude. The essence of netizens' creations and imitations is this very spirit."

*Black Myth: Wukong* is a reimagining of the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. In the game, players control a young monkey who decides to follow in Wukong's footsteps to the West after the Monkey King's death. Along the way, he overcomes various trials and challenges, hoping to help Wukong come back to life.

Zhelai believes the core of the original novel is a heroic epic that emphasizes Wukong's transformation and growth. She feels that both the game and the song remain true to the novel by highlighting the essence of humanity, which is why they resonate with so many people.

According to her, the creation of *Pi* embodies elements of Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, and narra-

tive. For example, a key aspect of Chinese music aesthetics is the concept of "leaving space".

"There are moments in my singing where there is complete silence — an emptiness — before I release the sound. That silence allows me to convey something meaningful," Zhelai explained.

"This performance reflects the Chinese way of storytelling, giving the song a rhythm distinct from Western narratives."

She also noted that the arrangement of *Pi* combines Western symphonic elements with traditional Chinese instruments such as the *zhong* (bell), *qing* (chime stone), and *bianzhong* (bronze chime bell).

"These instruments were commonly used in ancient ceremonial music in China," she said.

Zhelai believes her singing aligns with the song's spirit because her vocal exploration is deeply rooted in local Chinese culture and folk music.

"I grew up in the Gobi Desert and by the Qilian Mountains. The natural environment shaped my spirit and character. Later, I learned to play traditional instruments like the *pipa*, and in university, I studied Chinese national opera and folk art songs," she said.

In *Pi*, Zhelai weaves together various techniques from the folk songs of her hometown. For example, she used a long, linear note inspired by the Hua'er folk singing from Gansu.

"The mountains there are vast and barren, so greetings between people often stretch out melodically to carry over long distances. This imparts a broad, artistic atmosphere to the song," she explained.

Another element she draws from is Qinqiang, an ancient opera popular in Northwest China, also known for its powerful vocal style.

"These are the spiritual nutrients that this land has given me," she said.

In 2018, Zhelai began collecting and studying traditional folk songs from the Hexi Corridor — a historically significant trade route along the ancient Silk Road in Gansu — interviewing and learning from dozens of cultural inheritors. However, she doesn't simply replicate these songs; she blends modern music techniques and electronic arrangements to give traditional music a fresh, contemporary appeal.

Zhelai describes her style as "world music" — deeply rooted yet distinctly modern.

Her aspiration is to let the world hear the sounds of her hometown, especially Dunhuang, a city in Gansu known for its iconic Mogao Caves.

"Dunhuang is a cultural treasure trove where music has always played a crucial role. While many people appreciate the visual beauty of Dunhuang, few have truly heard it. Some films and videos about Dunhuang even use music from other places to accompany the visuals," Zhelai said.

"As a local, I want to bring the essence of the folk songs I grew up with to the world through my music projects."



Vocal artist Zhelai is the singer of *Pi*, one of the tracks from the game *Black Myth: Wukong*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Online  
Watch the video  
by scanning  
the code.

## Global Insights



Muisha Mbikyo Bienvenue (front) conducts a training session for Chinese doctors at The First Hospital of China Medical University in Shenyang, Liaoning. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## A Congolese heart guides Chinese healers

By WU YONG in Shenyang  
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In a conference room at The First Hospital of China Medical University in Shenyang, Liaoning province, members of the 22nd Chinese medical team bound for The Gambia are undergoing pre-departure training. All eyes are on a young black man at the podium, wearing a white lab coat and speaking in a fluent Northeastern Chinese dialect.

The man is Muisha Mbikyo Bienvenue, a doctoral student in internal medicine at the university from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This is the sixth time he has provided pre-departure training for medical teams heading to Africa.

"Over 10 years ago, I came to China to study medicine at my father's suggestion. Now I've come to understand the stark differences between the healthcare systems of China and my country, particularly in terms of resource distribution, service coverage, and technical proficiency," Bienvenue explained.

Since its inception in 2010, the International Education School of China Medical University has been committed to training healthcare professionals for the global medical community. To date, it has nurtured nearly 2,300 students from 108 countries.

When Bienvenue was young, his mother suffered from heart disease, but healthcare in his hometown was so underdeveloped that even getting a basic electrocardiogram required traveling long distances. "By the time I was 16, I had a clear goal — to become a cardiologist and treat my mother," he said.

Unfortunately, Bienvenue was unable to fulfill his dream in time to save her; she passed away five years ago. "Her passing became my driving force. I want to help more patients suffering from heart disease, just like my mother."

Since arriving in China, Bienvenue has worked arduously and has become one of the university's outstanding international students.

"He is an exceptionally hardworking and diligent student who has earned the trust of many patients," said Sun Yingxian, head of the cardiology department at the First Hospital.

To support Bienvenue's aspirations, the department has established a research project on a non-pharmacological treatment for high blood pressure, hoping to help improve healthcare in the DRC.

Liaoning, as the designated aid provider for The Gambia, selects outstanding medical professionals annually to form medical aid teams. China Medical University has actively participated in this initiative, leveraging its talent pool to make a meaningful impact.

In the training sessions for the medical team heading to The Gambia, Bienvenue provided practical guidance,

including key cultural and religious considerations as well as differences in medical practices.

"In The Gambia, many residents have distinct customs that differ significantly from those in China. For instance, during clinical diagnosis, doctors must obtain the patient's consent before any physical examination. Sudden contact can be perceived as disrespectful. This is quite normal in China, but in The Gambia, it requires careful attention," Muisha explained.

He also taught the team basic Swahili phrases to help them adapt more quickly to the local environment.

Bienvenue emphasized the high expectations Gambian patients have for Chinese doctors. "When patients come to the hospital, it's often because they have no other choice. They see doctors as their last hope," he said. "For many, the arrival of Chinese medical teams feels like a lifeline."

He also pointed out that many members of the medical team are his teachers. "When I shared with them the expectations African patients have for their doctors, I could sense their deep, selfless care for the people of Africa," he said. "They leave their families behind without hesitation, carrying the spirit of healing and humanitarianism to the continent."

“They leave their families behind without hesitation, carrying the spirit of healing and humanitarianism to the continent.”

Muisha Mbikyo Bienvenue, a student from the DRC at China Medical University

As China-Africa cooperation deepens, medical aid has become both a symbol and a testament to this evolving relationship. Over the past 60 years, China has sent over 25,000 medical personnel to African countries, treating hundreds of millions of patients and training many local healthcare professionals.

"Every time we talk about the future, I see a firm resolve in Bienvenue's eyes," said Liang Songnian, leader of the third medical aid team to The Gambia from Liaoning and deputy chief physician of the interventional therapy department at the First Hospital. "He often speaks about his desire to return to the DRC after graduation to alleviate his people's suffering and contribute to his country's healthcare."

Xing Zhijuan contributed to this story.