

Putting environment first

Country's adaptability gives it edge in confronting global climate change

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CHINA DAILY

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DRIVING REFORM

China aims for shift toward new growth drivers

Experts: More efforts needed to leverage role of market, tech innovation to boost productivity

By OUYANG SHIJIA, LIU ZHIHUA and ZHOU LANXU

A sustained focus on supporting innovation in strategic emerging sectors, future industries and traditional industries will be high on the agenda while implementing China's ongoing economic structural reforms, which are aimed at fostering new quality productive forces and driving a shift from old growth drivers to new ones, economists and entrepreneurs said.

Economists said the new quality productive forces will serve as a key driving force boosting China's economic growth in the coming years, which will help offset the real estate downturn, accelerate the building of a modern industrial system, and promote high-quality development over the long run.

Huang Hanquan, head of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, which is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission, said that fostering new quality productive forces is of vital importance in promoting high-quality economic growth, boosting total factor productivity and realizing Chinese modernization.

"Various regions and depart-

ments across China have embraced this approach to drive economic progress, which will significantly accelerate technological innovation, enhance industrial application and facilitate the shift of growth drivers from old to new ones," Huang said.

Despite geopolitical headwinds impacting China's economic growth trajectory and momentum, a new report sheds light on the success China is achieving by boosting investment in science and technology, as well as refocusing its efforts to enhance capabilities in emerging industries including artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles and electric vehicles, which is key to reinvigorating China's growth engine.

According to the Milken Institute's Best-Performing Cities China Index, cities that were home to a significant number of tech hubs displayed a high level of economic resilience. The report said Chinese cities that have strategically invested in emerging technologies will continue to thrive, even as the broader economy faces challenges both at home and abroad.

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Precious discovery



A panoramic view of a late Hongshan Culture stone mound uncovered in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region. The stone mound and over 100 jade artifacts that were unearthed were unveiled to the public on Sunday at a symposium. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Escalating conflict



Emergency workers use excavators on Saturday to clear rubble from the site of Friday's Israeli airstrike in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon. The deadly attack killed at least 45 people, including one of Hezbollah's top leaders. On Sunday, Hezbollah launched over 100 rockets across northern Israel, sending thousands of people scrambling into shelters for safety. BILAL HUSSEIN / AP

Washington blasted for high subsidies to PV sector

By LIU YUKUN liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

The China Photovoltaic Industry Association has expressed serious concerns about and strong opposition to the United States' distorting of the global solar market by providing excessive subsidies to US companies and imposing high tariffs on imported solar products.

It said the US moves are hampering international cooperation in the fight against climate change.

The trade body said in a recent statement that the US has built high walls of protectionism by imposing multiple trade restrictions and continuously increasing tariff barriers on imported photovoltaic products. In May, for example, the US decided that the import tax on Chinese solar cells would rise from 25 percent to 50 percent.

The association also pointed out that the US implemented exclusive and discriminatory industrial policies through legislation such as the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and subsidized its own photovoltaic industry on a large scale.

"The Inflation Reduction Act, introduced in 2022, offers subsidies of an unprecedented \$369 billion to support investments and production in the clean energy sector, including domestic PV products, aiming to reconstruct the PV industry chain," said the trade body's statement.

On May 16, the US Department of Energy announced \$71 million investment to fund the Silicon Solar Manufacturing and Dual-Use Photovoltaics Incubator Program (\$27 million) and the Advancing US Thin-Film Solar Photovoltaics Funding Program (\$44 million), aiming to close the gaps in PV supply chain manufacturing capabilities, the association added.

Such moves violated multilateral trade rules and severely distorted the market operations of the global supply chain of the PV industry, according to the statement.

Experts and business leaders said that while subsidies are common globally in the new energy industry, the US strategy of raising tariffs under anti-subsidy pretexts and financially backing domestic companies is a double standard, with the aim of hindering Chinese solar

companies from capturing global market share.

They said that Chinese-made solar and wind power equipment has facilitated the widespread adoption of affordable renewable energy worldwide, contributing to a global shift toward green development, adding that collaboration among global economies is essential for mutual gains in the sector.

Cui Fan, an international trade professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that policy interventions are necessary globally to address market flaws in advancing new energy. Solely relying on market forces could significantly delay global decarbonization progress by 20 to 30 years, which would be out of sync with the pace of global green initiatives, he added.

"However, in the WTO framework, subsidies must adhere to specific conditions, including avoiding unjust discrimination. The US' Inflation Reduction Act breaches this by favoring US products over Chinese imports," Cui said.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said that

the US' high subsidies for its new energy industry, as well as its consistent raising of tariffs on Chinese goods under anti-subsidy pretexts, showcase a US double standard.

Song Hao, assistant vice-president at GCL Technology Holdings, said the US' contradictory actions of restricting imports under anti-subsidy pretexts while heavily supporting domestic solar industries were undermining fairness.

Lin said: "Although the US has continuously raised trade barriers, it has limited impact on the Chinese solar industry, as China's direct exports to the US are relatively small. Chinese companies have diversified investments globally, forging stronger ties with Europe, the Middle East and other regions to explore new opportunities."

The US was not among the top 10 markets for China's solar module exports in the first half of this year, while Europe and Asia collectively accounted for over 80 percent of these exports, according to the China Photovoltaic Industry Association. Solar modules accounted for 87 percent of China's total PV product exports in terms of value, it added.

Digital transformation key to sustainability

The world's development paradigm has shifted to "digital by default" as a norm, reshaping societies and economies. As a hub for digitally driven innovations, the Asia-Pacific is well positioned to leverage the transformative potential of digital technologies to accelerate progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Emerging technologies are enabling smarter climate action, building more disaster-resilient cities and optimizing urban development. Artificial intelligence is helping improve the accuracy of early warning systems for disasters by providing the right information that reaches all the right people at the right time. Digital finance is more inclusive — expanding access especially for marginalized groups — while digital government platforms likewise enable public services to reach all citizens more effectively and efficiently.

WORLD WATCH
By Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana and Zhaslan Madiyev

The Asia-Pacific Digital Transformation Report 2024, which was launched in early September, demonstrates how digital innovations have enabled more sophisticated climate mitigation and adaptation measures across infrastructure, governance, mobility, industry and trade, disaster risk reduction, and agricultural and biodiversity ecosystems. Drawing from International Energy Agency data, the deployment of digital technologies and big data could save \$80 billion per year or around 5 percent of total world annual power generation costs, while digitalization can help the integration of renewables by enabling smart grids to better match energy demand.

However, the opportunities presented by digital innovations for sustainable development also face challenges and looming threats. The Asia-Pacific region is confronted with several barriers to the broad-scale adoption of digital solutions.

While 96 percent of the population in the region live in areas covered by mobile broadband networks, it is estimated that only one-third productively use internet services and up to 40 percent lack basic digital skills.

Moreover, while four out of five people in urban areas use the Internet, in rural areas, this figure is only 52 percent. Such gaps in meaningful access are due to digital divides that broadly follow age, income, education and geographic fault lines, with the gender divide underlying all these aspects.

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INSIDE Protectionism will not alleviate woes Global Views, page 13

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ROBOTAXIS ARRIVING AT A FUTURE NEAR YOU

Autonomous vehicles grow in popularity despite concerns over safety, reliability

By LI FUSHENG lifusheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Self-driving vehicles are navigating from science-fiction movies to the streets of large Chinese cities, overcoming obstacles and uncertainty as they enter everyday use.

The fast-evolving technology first made headlines in China almost a decade ago. In 2015, Swedish carmaker Volvo organized a test of its hands-free vehicles traveling at 70 kilometers per hour on Beijing's Sixth Ring Road.

Chinese technology giant Baidu set up its intelligent driving group

in-depth

in 2017, unveiling its Apollo autonomous driving plan the same year. Pony.ai, founded by former Baidu engineers, established its first research and development center in 2016.

By late February 2024, more than 20 cities had put in place policies supporting autonomous driving tests, issuing licenses to over 60 companies.

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PAGE TWO

Driverless: Vehicles on road to viability



A journalist takes a photo while riding in an autonomous vehicle in Chongqing in October. LI HE / XINHUA

From page 1

Progress had been generally going smoothly until July, when a short video went viral on social media of one of Baidu's Apollo Go driverless vehicles hitting a scooter in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province.

Baidu was quick to explain that the accident was because the scooter driver had run a red light when the driverless vehicle started to move.

Despite the accident being a minor one, as shown in the footage, it ignited complaints from local drivers and residents.

Apollo Go's Chinese name is *Luobo Kuaipao*, which literally means "robots run fast". But in Wuhan they are called "dumb robots", as more footage emerged showing their mishaps.

One driverless vehicle is seen stopping on the road in front of an empty plastic bag, causing a traffic jam. In another video, two vehicles are seen braking to face each other, and not knowing what to do next.

Safety questioned

But safety is the real concern. When that vehicle in Wuhan failed to see the scooter, local residents started to doubt the safety and reliability of driverless vehicles, as manufacturers have long claimed they are safer than human drivers.

At an event in May, Baidu's vice-president, Wang Yunpeng, said the number of insurance claims of its Apollo Go vehicles over the past two years was one 14th of that for human drivers.

In the second quarter of this year, Baidu's Apollo Go provided about 899,000 rides for passengers, up 26 percent year-on-year. As of July 28, the cumulative rides provided to the public by Apollo Go surpassed 7 million, the company said in its latest financial results.

The safety level of autonomous driving is 10 times that of manned driving, according to Pony.ai vice-president, Zhang Ning. The company had conducted 3.5 million km of driverless testing globally as of May this year.

However, a robotaxi doesn't have a quick solution when an injured passenger or road user needs help and needs to wait until the fleet operator sends someone to the scene.

If the accident is a minor one, the insurance company can try to settle and offer a certain amount of money.

However, the issue becomes muddier in the case of a more severe accident that causes injury or death and entails prison time.

It is likely the fleet company will be held accountable, but it is unclear who would be sent to jail — the software engineer, the CEO, the company owner, or possibly more than one of them.

Fresh pickup lines

Taxi drivers are also complaining that robotaxi firms are stealing their customers by offering generous subsidies.

A receipt for a 28-km, 64-minute

robotaxi trip in Wuhan showed that the fare was just 26.52 yuan (\$3.65 yuan), much cheaper than a normal taxi fare. But a closer look revealed that it had a discount of 109.52 yuan.

Wuhan has over 3,300 km of roads eligible for robotaxis, the longest in China. Robotaxis booked 850,000 rides in the first half of this year, more than for the whole of 2023, according to a Hubei Daily report.

In July, an Apollo Go vehicle booked up to 20 rides in one day, the same amount as a regular taxi, according to Shanghai-based news portal Jiemian.

There are around 400 Apollo Go vehicles in Wuhan, said Baidu CEO Robin Li. "Our fleet accounts for just 1 percent of Wuhan's total taxi fleet. It may take quite some time, even many years, to grow (the proportion)," said Li.

William Li, founder and CEO of NEV startup Nio, has sided with the taxi drivers.

He said that the goal of technology such as smart driving is to alleviate the burden of driving, and not to steal jobs from low-income earners. "It is not a very inspiring story. We will never do robotaxis," he said.

Nio has been investing heavily in driving-assist functions, and is one of the first carmakers in the world to adopt the latest Nvidia chips made for such features.

Gu Dasong, executive director of the Southeast University's Research Center for Transportation Law and Development, said robotaxis might reduce the need for commercial drivers, such as taxi drivers and freight drivers, to some extent over the long term.

However, the move to robotaxis will profoundly transform the labor market, with new job opportunities arising from such services.

Congestion concern

Baidu insists that robotaxis, if applied at a city-level, can solve



A passenger gets on an autonomous driving minibus in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on May 22. HUANG ZONGZHI / XINHUA

problems such as traffic jams and road accidents.

However, as long as there are drivers and robotaxis on the road at the same time, reduced congestion and collision-free motoring will not happen, analysts said.

Robotaxis tend to be good at following traffic rules and staying alert, but human drivers sometimes cut lanes and don't always focus on road conditions, they added.

Zhang Xiang, an auto analyst at North China University of Technology, said it will take at least 10 years for large-scale business operations of robotaxis to come to fruition.

Besides technological glitches that need to be improved, robotaxis now in operation attract customers who are not in a hurry and who want to have a novel experience.

Unlike regular taxis, they pick up and drop off passengers at fixed stops. They also have more conservative rules about road safety, and operate slower than regular taxis.

Robotaxis may suit customers who want to be left alone. But they may not be attractive to out-of-town visitors who want recommendations about a city from the driver.

However, they remove the potential of a driver taking an unnecessary detour to charge more.

Business sense

Despite the teething problems, robotaxis will soon make sense commercially, Baidu said with decreasing hardware costs and increasing orders, Apollo Go is expected to become profitable by 2025.

Apollo Go loses almost \$11,000 a car annually in Wuhan, Haitong International Securities estimated. A lower-cost driverless model could enable per-vehicle annual profit of nearly \$16,000, the securities firm said.

Chen Zhuo, Apollo Go's general manager, said the firm would become "the world's first commercially profitable" autonomous-driving platform.

Pony.ai is confident about the sector's prospects as well. In a 160 square-km designated zone in Beijing's E-Town, a national-level economic-technological development area, the company operates nearly 100 robotaxis.

Compared to years ago, the rides are much smoother with no abrupt braking, and the vehicles run in a similar way to other taxi services.

Pony.ai aims to increase its single-city robotaxi fleet tenfold by 2025 or 2026, said the company's vice-presi-

dent, Zhang, in an interview with Xinhua.

"We've now come to the stage where it is possible to reduce costs on a larger scale of commercialization," he said. "As long as the robotaxi fleet reaches above 1,000 in one city, we will be able to break even in operation (terms)."

Pony.ai is teaming up with Japanese carmaker Toyota to roll out new-generation vehicles. They will have pre-installed autonomous driving technology, making production more efficient.

"Five or six years ago, most people doubted whether autonomous driving could take root in China. There are no such doubts now," Zhang said.

Attracting financing

Investor interest is also fueling the sector's progress.

Pony.ai has secured more than \$1.4 billion of financing from both domestic and foreign investors since 2017. The company was valued at \$8.5 billion as of October last year.

The investment environment for the industry has been improving since last year, despite fluctuations in previous years, according to the company.

WeRide, based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, plans to offer 6.45 million American depositary shares at a price range of \$15.50 to \$18.50 in its upcoming initial public offering, according to a company filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission in August.

The company reported revenue of 401.8 million yuan in 2023. For the first six months of this year, its revenue was 150.3 million yuan, according to the filing.

WeRide generates most of its revenue from sales of its Level 4 autonomous driving vehicles, "primarily including robobuses, robotaxis and robosweepers, and related sensor suites; and ... the provision of L4 autonomous driving and advanced driver-assistance system services, including the provision of L4 operational and technical support services as well as ADAS research and development services", the filing said.

The Society of Automotive Engineers International defines six levels of automation from Level 0 to Level 5. Level 4 means the vehicle can operate itself in most circumstances, while L5, also known as full driving automation, requires no human participation.

All China's robotaxi companies are working on Level 4 vehicles.

World-leading growth

Global consulting firm McKinsey & Company has forecast that China will become the world's largest market for self-driving vehicles, with revenue from such vehicles and mobility services exceeding \$500 billion by 2030.

"We've seen an acceleration in China. There's certainly now a rapid pace of permits being issued," said Boston Consulting Group managing director Augustin Wegscheider. "The US has been a lot more gradual."

Alphabet's Waymo is the only United States firm operating unmanned robotaxis that collect fares.

The company has about 700 cars operating in San Francisco and Los Angeles in California, Phoenix in Arizona, and Austin, Texas, but not all of them are in service at all times.

Cruise, backed by General Motors, restarted testing in April after one of its vehicles hit a pedestrian last year. Cruise said it operates in three cities, with safety its core mission.

"There's a clear contrast between US and China" with robotaxi developers facing far more scrutiny and higher hurdles in the US, former Waymo CEO John Krafcik said in an interview with Reuters.

China will operate the world's largest robotaxi fleet of about 12 million self-driving vehicles by 2040, followed by the US with around 7 million, according to a report by research company BloombergNEF.

Li Hengyu, vice-president of Pony.ai and head of its robotruck business unit, said: "The central and local governments in China rank first in the world in terms of their openness and understanding of autonomous driving."

China has also been stepping up efforts to integrate vehicles, roads, and cloud computing, which is a crucial step to grow smart vehicles into smart cities.

In July, five ministries, including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Transport, issued a notice to identify 20 cities or city clusters, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as pilot areas for the technology.



A fleet of robotaxis goes through an on-road trial of autonomous vehicles in Ordos, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in July, 2023. WANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Shanghai meet highlights role of innovation

City to expand science and tech exchanges with other markets, says senior official

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Amid Shanghai's continued efforts to deepen international cooperation in terms of research and development, multinational companies should be better integrated into the city's innovation network, which is conducive to the city's high-quality development, said officials and company executives.

They made the remarks on Sunday during the 36th International Business Leaders' Advisory Council for the Mayor of Shanghai.

Chen Jining, Party secretary of Shanghai, said that as technological innovation has been playing an increasingly important role in driving economic growth, Shanghai will expand its science and technology exchanges with other markets.

Efforts will be made to develop offshore technology innovation, Chen said, adding that a foundation to advance coordinated technology innovation at a global level will be built in Lin-gang Special Area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone.

International organizations are also encouraged to set up branches in the city, and all these steps are aimed at nurturing an open, fair, just and nondiscriminatory environment for technology innovation in Shanghai, he said.

Shanghai Mayor Gong Zheng said the scientific research paradigm is undergoing profound changes amid the new round of technological and industrial revolution, and coordination and cooperation is crucial against this backdrop.

Shanghai will implement a global technology partner plan, and will also actively participate in, nurture

and initiate international large-scale scientific projects, he said.

Multinational companies will be encouraged to set up international R&D centers and open innovation centers in the city, and will be deeply integrated into Shanghai's local innovation network, Gong added.

As of June, 985 multinational companies had set up their regional headquarters in Shanghai, and the number of foreign-funded R&D centers reached 575, according to the municipal government.

Severin Schwan, chairman of the board of directors of Swiss healthcare company Roche Group, said that openness, innovation and collaboration are important for Shanghai's high-quality development, particularly in the wake of geopolitical tensions and market uncertainties.

Multinational companies can tap into the sectors of healthcare, science and technology, and the digital economy more deeply, said Schwan, who is also chairman for this year's International Business Leaders' Advisory Council.

Dominic Barton, chairman of multinational mining company Rio Tinto, said the private sector has been contributing substantially to research projects, and this is a global trend.

Miguel Lopez, CEO of German industrial and engineering conglomerate thyssenkrupp AG, suggested that Shanghai could place great importance on and fully utilize multinational companies' industrial expertise, global networks, international experience and innovative resources.

The International Business Leaders' Advisory Council was initiated in 1989 and has grown into a think tank for Shanghai mayors over time.

This year's meeting was attended by top executives of 34 multinational companies from 13 countries.



Flood woes

An aerial photo shows partially submerged cars after heavy rains lashed Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture, Japan, on Saturday. Torrential rains have led to flooding and landslides in the country. In Noto Peninsula, one person was reported dead while several others are missing, Japanese news media said.
KYODO NEWS VIA AP

Experts laud SCO for promoting stability

By SONG PING
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With its growing membership and focus on sustainable development, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is poised to play a more significant role in promoting regional stability, economic growth and ecological sustainability, experts said.

"The SCO has immense potential to explore new economic development models based on sustainable principles," said Akylybek Kylychev, rector at the Kyrgyz Republic's Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He made the remarks during the two-day SCO International Think Tank Forum held over the weekend, where more than 100 scholars and experts gathered from 10 countries to discuss the evolving role of the SCO in fostering regional stability, sustainable development and geopolitical cooperation.

The forum, themed "Promoting Sustainable Development, Building a Shared Home", was hosted by the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Institute of Central Asia of Shaanxi Normal University, and the China University of Petroleum (Beijing).

Kylychev emphasized the importance of closer multilateral

cooperation within the SCO, noting that "building an SCO community of shared future will strengthen mutual understanding, trust and cooperation among member states, fostering common development".

He mentioned China's initiatives within the organization, highlighting their significance for global security and stability, especially as they contribute to multilateral efforts in addressing regional challenges.

The importance of multilateralism within the SCO was echoed by Mirvaisov Mamurdzhon, head of the Department of International Cooperation at the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. "We all know that no country in the world can cope with these threats and challenges alone or effectively," he said, emphasizing that the deteriorating situation in the Middle East has prompted Central Asian countries to recognize the interconnected nature of security threats. "The SCO has increasingly become a crucial platform for security, stability and economic development," he added.

Sun Zhuangzhi, director of the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, called for enhanced multilateral cooperation within the SCO. "The SCO is our home. How we build this home better is an immediate priority," he said.

While the recent inclusion of Belarus into the SCO expands the organization's influence, Sun acknowledged that the increasing number of members also brings new challenges in coordination and decision-making among member states. "We need to strengthen the mechanisms within the SCO framework to ensure more efficient decision-making processes."

The complexity of internal coordination was further elaborated by Ding Xiaoxing, director of the Institute of Eurasian Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations. Ding advocated for reforms to improve the SCO's efficiency, particularly by enhancing the Secretariat's role to make the organization more responsive in urgent situations.

The organization now has 10 member states, two observer states, and 14 dialogue partner countries. "As the number of member countries grows, the challenges of internal coordination become increasingly complex," Ding said, highlighting the need for streamlining procedures.

Amid discussions of security and governance, scholars also focused on sustainable development as 2025 has been declared the SCO's Year of Sustainable Development. "Strengthening cooperation within the SCO framework in the area of circular economy will enhance the

competitiveness of members' economies and strengthen their collective positions in key international forums that shape global sustainable development policies," said Nadezhda Batova, associate professor at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus' Institute of Economics.

Batova called for member states to exchange best practices and technologies related to sustainable production, which she believed could spur large-scale investment projects.

Liu Qian, executive deputy director of the Center for Russian and Central Asian Studies at China University of Petroleum (Beijing), supported this idea by emphasizing the potential for renewable energy cooperations between China and Central Asian countries. Liu cited some ongoing collaborative projects, including photovoltaic power plants in Kazakhstan and electric vehicle production facilities in Uzbekistan, as examples of China's active role in supporting Central Asia's energy transition.

Li Juan, associate professor at Shaanxi Normal University's Institute of Central Asia, highlighted China's "technology, funding, and willingness" to collaborate with Central Asian countries on renewable energy projects. She pointed out that this cooperation could play a key role in driving Central Asia's transition toward a greener, more sustainable economy.

The glass that cheers



Festival goers reach out for the first glasses of beer on Saturday, the first day of the 189th Oktoberfest beer festival in Munich, Germany.
MATTHIAS SCHRADER / AP

Connectivity: Policies key to bridging divide

From page 1

With the use of artificial intelligence rapidly rising, the need and urgency to bridge the digital divides between and within countries remain critical to ensure the full enjoyment of the benefits of digital technologies for all, while minimizing their risks.

Deploying innovative breakthrough solutions in bridging the digital divides and leveraging digital transformation for sustainable development will require mobilizing investments at scale in new infrastructure and connectivity. To this end, expanding affordable

high-speed Internet coverage, particularly among marginalized and underserved communities in rural areas, as well as offering digital skills training and lifelong learning, are critical for reducing digital disparities and connecting the unconnected. By sharing knowledge, experiences and practices among countries, regional cooperation can create a conducive environment for innovation to flourish and steer us toward an inclusive digital future.

These holistic approaches require a high level of policy ambition. At the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation, which the UN Economic

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific organized in partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan in Astana from Sept 3-5, ministers deliberated for a common vision, centered on innovative and collaborative digital solutions grounded in regional cooperation. In this regard, the conference considered the possibility of establishing a Digital Solutions Center for Sustainable Development in Kazakhstan that aims to share practical digital solutions to advance the sustainable development agenda in the region.

Relatedly, the ESCAP Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative and its Action Plan 2022-2026

contribute to the collective push to extend meaningful connectivity to all, scale up digital technology applications and strengthen digital data, which form the foundations for an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

With Asia and the Pacific at the forefront of a global digital transformation, a sustainable future is within reach. Let us seize on the digital promise to accelerate sustainable development in our region.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana is the Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP. Zhaslan Madiyev is the Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Growth: Market access optimized for new forms of business and sectors

From page 1

Highlighting that sci-tech innovation is a key element in the development of new quality productive forces, Huang from the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research called for more efforts to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies by investing more in fundamental research and tackling the choke points, and stepping up reforms in the scientific and technological, education and talent systems.

More efforts should also be made to advance reforms in the market-based allocation of production factors, allowing factors such as land, labor, capital and technology to flow freely and efficiently to fields of new quality productive factors, he said.

Looking ahead, Huang said the country should foster new pillar industries including next-generation information technology, new

energy vehicles, new energy, and new materials, to offset the impact of the decline in real estate on China's economy and create new growth drivers.

Huang's remarks came after a resolution adopted in July at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China placed great emphasis on improving the institutions and mechanisms for fostering new quality productive forces in line with local conditions.

Justin Yifu Lin, dean of Peking University's Institute of New Structural Economics, said that regions with development gaps should measure their progress compared to their own past rather than shifting their focus to the pursuit of success in frontier activities, which could result in haphazard or uneven development.

There are two different types of

new quality productive forces: one that invents new technologies and one that applies them, thus applying new technologies in traditional sectors should be treated as part of the drive to harness new quality productive forces.

"Regions with gaps in development should use new technologies to improve productivity. It's essential to follow the principle of seeking truth from facts and develop according to competitive advantages," Lin said.

China must better leverage the role of the market and tap the opportunity of technological innovation to enhance productivity, especially as it stands at the same starting line with other countries for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, an opportunity China "cannot afford to miss", he said.

China is taking solid steps to optimize the business environment and

fostering new quality productive forces, as the country recently released a guideline to improve its market access system. It marks the country's key push to implement the resolution adopted at the third plenary session, which said the nation will refine its market access system and take more measures to remove barriers.

The guideline details 10 measures, including improving the negative list management model, strengthening the coordination of policies for domestic and foreign-funded enterprises, and optimizing the market access environment for new forms of business and new sectors.

Liu Qiao, dean of Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, said that high-standard opening-up and deeper institutional reforms will create immense room for improvement in resource allocation efficiency, leading to an

increase in the growth rate of total factor productivity.

Liu noted that the path to new quality productive forces involves expanding into industries and fields that can enhance TFP and form new quality productive forces, adding that there are two paths to achieving this objective. "The first route involves leveraging revolutionary technological changes to foster strategic emerging industries and future endeavors, including sectors associated with energy transition and digital transformation, as well as future-oriented industries like quantum computing and AI-driven big data. These will create new momentum, aiding in the acceleration of TFP growth."

"The second path involves opportunities brought about by China's transformation and upgrade of traditional industries. Currently, the productivity in China's agricultural and services sectors, for example, is rela-

tively low, offering significant potential for increasing TFP," he said.

Global executives hailed China's reform initiatives aimed at fostering new quality productive forces, saying that they present rising opportunities for global stakeholders.

Nancy Wang, country manager at LinkedIn China, said that China's vigorous pursuit of new quality productive forces aims to foster an innovation-driven economic growth model centered on technological advancement, sending a signal of China's readiness to face the challenges of globalization and technological revolution with greater openness, inclusivity and innovation.

Victor Tsao, vice-president of Red Hat and general manager of Red Hat Greater China, said, "We believe that through further deepening reform and opening-up, and optimizing the business environment, China will continue to attract more foreign enterprises."

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CHINA

Looking for work

Students participate in a job fair at Southeast University in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Saturday. More than 300 companies and institutions from across the country, including research institutes and enterprises engaged in industries such as information technology and intelligent manufacturing, attended the event and offered over 39,000 jobs. YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Chinese magnet sets world record

HEFEI— Chinese scientists used an independently developed resistive magnet on Sunday to produce a steady magnetic field of 42.02 tesla, equivalent to over 800,000 times the Earth's magnetic field, breaking a seven-year-old world record set by the United States.

The milestone achievement by the High Magnetic Field Laboratory at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Hefei Institutes of Physical Science is expected to drive scientific discoveries and applications in a wide range of technological fields.

The previous record of 41.4 tesla was set by the US' National High Magnetic Field Laboratory in 2017.

A steady high magnetic field is an extreme experimental condition that can serve as a powerful tool for scientific research. In the experimental environment of a high magnetic field, the properties of matter can be manipulated, which is conducive to scientists discovering new phenomena and exploring new laws of matter, experts said.

High magnetic fields can also spur applications in fields such as electromagnetic metallurgy and chemical reaction synthesis, and especially in the widespread usage of nuclear magnetic resonance technology in medical science.

Due to its significant value in various fields such as physics, chemistry, material science and life science, a steady high magnetic field has been referred to as the "cradle" of the Nobel Prizes.

The new achievement results from nearly four years of efforts by the research team, which involved innovating magnetic structures and optimizing manufacturing processes, said Kuang Guangli, academic director of the High Magnetic Field Laboratory.

Kuang said the breakthrough could meet users' needs for a fast, regulated and stable high magnetic field, provide scientists with powerful experimental conditions, and lay a key technological foundation for China's construction of higher-field steady magnets.

There are three types of steady-state magnets: resistive magnets, superconducting magnets, and hybrid magnets that combine the other two types.

The Hefei laboratory produced a steady field of 45.22 tesla with a hybrid magnet in 2022, setting a world record for all working magnets.

"Resistive magnets and superconducting magnets are both 'single masters', while a hybrid magnet is a 'mixed-doubles combination'", Kuang said, making a comparison between magnet development and table tennis.

"In 2022, we won the mixed-doubles championship with comprehensive advantages. Today, we won the singles."

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

Experts hopeful after WorldSkills success

Achievements could alter negative perceptions about vocational path

By WANG MINGJIE in London
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China's dominance at the 47th WorldSkills Competition in Lyon, France, has reinforced its commitment to fostering skills-based careers and recognizing the value of vocational education, experts said.

Chinese participants took home 36 gold, nine silver and four bronze medals, along with eight medals for excellence at the competition held earlier this month. With a delegation of 68 contestants, China had the largest number of entries across all 59 skill disciplines, highlighting its leadership in the global vocational skills arena.

One standout was Zhang Yupeng, who won the gold medal in the jewelry event.

He described the competition as the most challenging experience of his life, citing the intense pressure.

Nevertheless, he was the only competitor to complete all assigned tasks, including creating a bird-themed hairpin featuring Chinese cultural elements.

Zhang, who teaches jewelry design and manufacturing at Beijing Arts & Design Technology Institute, said he found his passion by observing skilled artisans.

"There were several times when I thought about giving up due to unexpected difficulties. I worked for about five years, logging over 18,000 hours of practice," he said.

"From knowing nothing to becoming a national-level expert, it feels like a dream. Truly, skills can change one's destiny, and success through skills is attainable."

Shawna Bourke, director of marketing and communications at WorldSkills International, praised China's systematic approach to developing skilled talent.

"China uses the WorldSkills Occupational Standards to skill up millions of young skilled people, creating a high level of talent and a

pipeline for success in international skills competitions," she said.

The competition has also played a key role in elevating the status of trade skills, according to Simon Field, an independent expert on skills and director of Skills Policy, a consultancy in London. Field pointed out the challenges many countries, including China, face in encouraging young people to pursue skilled trades rather than traditional academic paths.

"One of the great achievements of World Skills is to enhance the status of trade skills by treating them as Olympic sports," he said. "I think China's achievements in WorldSkills should translate into a valuably enhanced view of vocational education and training in China."

Historically, fields such as law and finance have been seen as the most aspirational career paths for graduates in China. However, experts suggest China's recent success in vocational competitions could lead to a shift in this mindset.

Tom Harper, a China specialist at the University of East London, said that China's achievements at WorldSkills reflect the country's broader push toward technological development.

"China's recent success in the WorldSkills Competition can serve as an indication of the priorities for China's future development, which has placed a greater emphasis on technical skills and advanced technologies and less emphasis on more financial fields," he said. "As China evolves, more practical skills will gain greater traction among young Chinese."

He added that the competition mirrors the government's efforts to develop technological expertise, with the younger generation at the forefront of the transformation, moving away from traditional academic paths toward skills-based careers.

"It's impressive, both in terms of

Cao Xuebing, a lecturer in human resource management at Keele University in Keele, England, said: "China's achievements at the Lyon competition will no doubt provide a unique experience in developing vocational education that can be shared by other countries."

"It's proof that the country's strategic investment into vocational education over the past few decades has paid off, and the success has far-reaching implications for socioeconomic development because skilled labor, which is central to developing human capital, is key for a country to gain a competitive advantage on the world stage."

Wang Qing, a professor of marketing and innovation at Warwick University in Coventry, England, echoed Cao's remarks.

"It's no surprise that China performed so well," she said. "The country has ample resources, experience and an efficient system for selecting and training outstanding candidates for international competitions like WorldSkills."

While Wang agrees that China's focus on vocational careers is gaining momentum, she cautions that more work is needed.

"The shift from an overemphasis on the highly competitive national higher education entrance exams to a more skills-based career approach is still in its early stages. This is a much-needed change for the sustainable development of China's economy," she said.

Wang emphasized that while the accolades from the WorldSkills Competition may inspire young people, changing the deep-rooted belief that university degrees are superior to vocational education will take time.

"These awards should have some positive impact on young people's career aspirations, but there is still a long way to go in terms of changing people's long-held beliefs about the value of universities versus vocational education and career paths," she added.

Digital publishing industry in China growing rapidly

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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The digital publishing industry in China is experiencing rapid growth and high-quality productivity, as revealed in the 2023-2024 annual report on China's digital publishing industry.

The report was unveiled at the 14th China International Digital Publishing Expo, which kicked off in Haikou, Hainan province, on Saturday.

According to the report, China's digital publishing industry earned an estimated 1.6 trillion yuan (\$229 billion) in revenue last year, up 19 percent from 2022.

Internet advertising, online gaming, online education and digital music continue to lead the industry in terms of revenue. Last year, internet advertising saw 719 billion yuan in revenue, online gaming raked in 303 billion yuan, online education earned 288 billion yuan and digital music netted 191 billion yuan.

The report highlighted the growth of some digital publishing sectors, with internet periodicals, e-books and digital newspapers generating a combined revenue of 11.3 billion yuan in 2023, an 8.56 percent year-on-year increase.

Digital publishing offers a wealth of possibilities for vibrant storytelling and engaging readers in new ways, according to Wang Qing, chairman of the Central China Publishing and Media Investment Holding Group.

Wang noted that the process of digitization is shaping new content scenarios within the publishing industry. Compared to traditional publishers, digital platforms provide unique advantages in terms of content activation, user reach and fostering a return to reading.

"Publishing companies must capture data through their services and let this data empower them to provide even better services," he added.

Virginie Clayssen, president of the digital commission at the French Publishers Association, agreed that publishers should embrace digital transformation to become leading providers of high-quality digital books. She said that technology plays a vital role in "resurrecting" out-of-print books and making forgotten literary heritage accessible to a wider audience.

Zhou Qing, chairman of Sichuan Xinhua Publishing Group,



In the future, AI will serve as a tool for empowering the publishing industry, and the industry will also become a supplier of language data for artificial intelligence."

Zhou Qing, chairman of Sichuan Xinhua Publishing Group

said that in the era of artificial intelligence, the industry is evolving into a service industry centered around data, algorithms and computing power. With its vast accumulation of content resources over its long development, the traditional publishing industry is well-positioned to transform from content resources to digital products through the establishment of large models.

"In the future, AI will serve as a tool for empowering the publishing industry, and the industry will also become a supplier of language data for artificial intelligence," he said. "The two will form an economic community where technology and content are integrated, and input and output are mutually driving."

The publication of online literature in China is flourishing, the report said. In December, the number of online literature readers reached a record 537 million, and the number of online literary works exceeded 36 million, with over 24 million authors contributing content.

The emerging online animation sector also showed strong development momentum last year, achieving revenue of 36 billion yuan.

A focus on producing high-quality content, using premium resources and engaging in deep development efforts has led to the creation of top-notch animated works and the establishment of well-known brand systems.

"Through robust market research and clear user profiling, the industry has enhanced the targeting and applicability of its content, paving the way for the industrialization and high-quality development of online animation," the report said.



A child experiences writing with a Chinese calligraphy brush on a digital screen at the 14th China International Digital Publishing Expo in Hainan province on Saturday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Event marks one-year countdown to biosphere reserve congress

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
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UNESCO's Fifth World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, to be held in China next year, will provide a model and an exemplar for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, experts and officials said at an event in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, over the weekend to mark the one-year countdown to the congress.

On the sidelines of the event held in the city's Lin'an district, Antonio Abreu, director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences in the Natural Sciences

Sector of UNESCO and Secretary of the MAB Programme, inspected the former Tianmushan Biosphere Reserve last year.

He said the experience gave him high expectations for next year's congress and council meeting.

"China is really expressing the relationship between man and nature," he said. "Here, we see the full dimensions of nature conservation, scientific understanding and knowledge, while also bringing together landscape concerns, water management, and integrating heritage and culture."

"It's impressive, both in terms of

the way things are being done and the strategic planning and conceptual approach involved."

The congresses, held every 10 years, are the largest international conferences in the Man and the Biosphere Programme.

The fifth congress — the first in the Asia-Pacific region — will take place in Hangzhou from Sept 22 to 27 next year.

The four previous congresses have been held in Minsk, Belarus; Seville and Madrid, Spain; and Lima, Peru.

"I am sure that it will be a landmark event for the Man and the Biosphere Programme, and I can-

not think of a better place to design and envision the future," Abreu said. "Led by UNESCO and China, all nations of the world can work together to shape the next 10-year strategy."

The Tianmushan Biosphere Reserve was designated by the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme in 1996, and was the first reserve in Zhejiang to be included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

In July, it was extended from 43 square kilometers to 547 sq km, and now incorporates the Qingliangfeng National Nature Reserve,

which also forms part of the Tianmu Mountain Range, and its name was changed accordingly.

The expansion will enhance the integrity of the reserve's ecosystem.

"Applying for expansion requires submitting a series of findings, including biodiversity characteristics, species status, and community planning, which typically involves a long process," said Han Qunli, a member of the advisory committee of the Chinese National Committee for the Man and the Biosphere Programme. "However, Lin'an achieved this in just two years."

CHINA

Vietnamese student fulfills Chinese dream

Postgraduate at Wuhan university hosts Mandarin courses online for parents and children from her home country

By ZHOU LIHUA, LIU KUN
in Wuhan and PENG CHAO

Nguyen Thi Phuoc, a Vietnamese student at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law in Wuhan, Hubei province, will graduate next year, fulfilling her decade-long dream of earning a postgraduate degree in international Chinese language education.

Born and raised in Bac Ninh province, home to many large Chinese enterprises, Phuoc and her friends often met Chinese people. They shared photos of Chinese scenery and cuisine, which aroused their curiosity and led them to choose Chinese language as their major in university. "Mastering Mandarin often means more job opportunities," she said, noting that her cousins had also followed this path.

Upon graduating from Hanoi Open University in 2015, Phuoc initially planned to continue her studies in Chinese language. However, China Railway Sixth Group offered her a job as a translator, so she decided to start working first. At work, Phuoc witnessed most of the construction process of Vietnam's first light rail, from the piling stage to the final decoration. "This job was a bit challenging for me, as I'm not only dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary, but also with new things that have never appeared in Vietnam," she said.

At first, she couldn't tell "station hall" from "station platform", since both "hall" and "platform" in Vietnamese refer to public places where people wait. But they are completely different in the engineering budget sheet. "When the light rail was first introduced in Vietnam, the language



Nguyen Thi Phuoc

was not yet prepared for it. Therefore, experts from both China and Vietnam worked together to come up with Vietnamese translations to address this issue," Phuoc said.

Following the completion of the light rail line in 2021, Phuoc moved to Wuhan, where she established an online group to teach Mandarin to Vietnamese parents and their children, amid the growing interest in learning Mandarin among her fellow citizens.

The online group has grown to over 2,000 active members who regularly engage in daily language learning activities. They share nursery rhymes and graded readings, and

some have even formed sub-communities tailored to different age groups. The parents also share videos of their children practicing spoken Chinese with Phuoc, and ask for advice.

"It makes me feel so happy to see the children reading aloud with enthusiasm and vividness," she said.

To pursue further studies in Chinese language education, Phuoc applied for and received a Chinese government scholarship last year to study at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law.

Her family was hesitant to support her academic pursuits as extensive reading may further damage her already fragile eyesight.

"I was blind for about a year in my second year of junior high school," Phuoc said. "Fortunately, I was able to partially regain my vision through medication and adjustments."

Phuoc said the friendly exchanges between Vietnam and China are a growing trend, and she hopes to contribute to the development of Chinese-language teaching materials and curricula in Vietnam.

Starting this year, Chinese language has been included as a compulsory subject in the third and fourth grades in Vietnam, making it the fifth country to incorporate Chinese into its compulsory education.

While teaching Mandarin online to her fellow citizens, Phuoc often arranges a Q&A session where parents and children can ask her about China. "They are so curious about Chinese technology and customs that they would always come to me with questions after watching the videos about China that I shared on social media," she said.

Phuoc has also noticed a rise in the

number of Vietnamese companies setting up operations in Wuhan.

Last year, Phuoc also took up the study of the *guqin*, a traditional Chinese musical instrument she has long admired. Despite the initial challenges, the serene sounds of the *guqin* and the cultural narratives embedded in its music bring her peace.

Learning the *guqin* and Mandarin was difficult in the beginning, but with patience and faith, positive changes will happen over time, Phuoc said.

"It was like I initially thought Wuhan locals were quarrelsome, but later I realized it was the vivacity and assertiveness stemming from the city's dock culture," she added.

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Students play bamboo flutes at Yinshan ethnic primary school in Yuping county, Guizhou province, on Aug 7. HU PANXUE / XINHUA

Sound of bamboo flute imparts cultural legacy

GUIYANG — Each day after completing her homework during the summer vacation, Xia Meng, a student at Yinshan ethnic primary school, devotes most of her time to practicing the bamboo flute.

Just a month ago, her primary school introduced a distinctive interlude to the school day — a bamboo flute ensemble. Over 2,500 students, dressed in vibrant traditional attire, came together to perform a collective flute piece. As a novice, Xia found herself enchanted by the skill of her peers.

Xia's school is nestled in Yuping Dong autonomous county in Southwest China's Guizhou province. Known as the "hometown of the Chinese bamboo flute", the county is home to nearly 30 enterprises and workshops dedicated to the production of Yuping bamboo flutes.

According to local cultural experts, the county's tradition of crafting bamboo flutes dates back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Made from indigenous bamboo, each flute undergoes more than 30 meticulous processes, including selection, shaping, engraving, grinding and tuning, before it reaches its final form.

As an emblem of traditional handmade musical instruments, the Yuping bamboo flute earned the gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915. This achievement marked it as one of the first Chinese ethnic musical instruments to receive international acclaim.

In 2006, the techniques of making Yuping bamboo flutes were inscribed in the inaugural list of China's national intangible cultural heritages.

To better preserve and promote the craft and the rich ethnic culture it embodies, the county has been creating more opportunities for the younger generation to engage with this ancient art, from learning about the flutes to crafting and playing them.

Recently, students from Yuping Secondary Vocational School were invited to the county's flute museum to view its rich collection.

During their visit, Zheng Jincheng, the museum curator, shared the historical narratives

"The bamboo flute has inspired a growing number of youngsters like me to safeguard and carry forward this cultural legacy."

Yang Sitong, student from the Yuping Secondary Vocational School

and profound memories associated with the flutes, allowing the young visitors to appreciate their evolution and the allure of their ethnic culture.

The enthusiasm of the younger generation has also inspired young teachers to participate. In a bamboo flute class for sixth grade students at Yinshan ethnic primary school, 33-year-old Yao Sha taught the students how to perform a Chinese folk song on the bamboo flute.

Beyond a traditional musical instrument, the Yuping bamboo flute has also become an exquisite work of art. Artisans engrave dragons, phoenixes, landscapes and poetry onto the flutes. One local craftsman even inscribed *The Thousand Character Classic*, a Chinese poem used as a primer for teaching Chinese characters to children in ancient China, onto a single flute.

As a local training ground for artisans, the Yuping Secondary Vocational School boasts a specialized workshop for flute production and offers a range of courses on flute culture. This special curriculum has helped the students deepen their understanding of flute culture and keep performance skills alive — and relevant.

"When I visited the museum, I saw poems engraved on the flutes, which showcased the extensive and profound culture of the Yuping bamboo flute," said Yang Sitong, a student from the vocational school. "The bamboo flute has inspired a growing number of youngsters like me to safeguard and carry forward this cultural legacy."

XINHUA

Officer continues duties despite serious injuries

By LI PEIXUAN
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"If such a situation arises again, as a police officer, I will rush to handle it again," said Xu Donghua, who in March 2019 had his thumb sliced off and sustained serious injuries requiring over 100 stitches while trying to detain an individual with a knife who was out of control.

In September 2022, China's Ministry of Public Security awarded him the title of Second-Class Hero Model of the National Public Security System.

Xu, 36, currently serving as an instructor at Shazhouba Police Station of the Ruijin Public Security Bureau in Jiangxi province, hails from a family with a long military tradition.

His grandfather, a retired soldier, told him many times the moving stories of his great-grandfather, a martyr of the Red Army, who sacrificed his life during the fourth anti-circumference campaign in Fujian province at age 35 in the early 1930s.

"From a young age, my dream was to become a soldier or a police offi-

cer to protect my country," Xu said.

On March 20, 2019, Xu received a report that a man had stolen a boning knife from a meat stall at a market in Ruijin.

Immediately rushing to the scene, Xu and his colleague saw a man brandishing the knife. Xu requested reinforcements while decisively confronting the man.

Using a forked steel pole, Xu pinned the man against a wall, but slipped on the wet pavement. The man broke free, slashing wildly at Xu. Although his colleagues were able to control the man, Xu was severely injured.

"Xu was brought into the operating room covered in blood, with his thumb severed and multiple deep wounds on his face and hands," said Liu Yuanliang, deputy director of Ganzhou East Hand and Foot Surgical Hospital.

The surgery lasted nearly seven hours, requiring over 100 stitches. Before being wheeled into the operating room, Xu did not utter a single groan but repeatedly asked his colleagues if the man had been detained and if any civilians had

Police officer Xu Donghua.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

been hurt, according to Liu.

"My mind was filled with controlling the man at the time because he posed a significant threat to the surrounding people," Xu recalled.

Despite his serious injuries, Xu did not allow his colleagues to inform his wife, who is also a police officer, as she was still nursing their one-month-old child. "I was afraid to let her know," he said.

His wife, Feng Yuan Yuan, learned about his injuries by chance

through a post on the Ruijin Public Security Bureau's WeChat account and rushed to the hospital. Seeing her husband covered in bandages, she said nothing, but wiped his body with a towel, tears streaming down her face. Even Xu couldn't hold back his tears when seeing his wife.

After more than six months, Xu said, most of wounds had healed but the psychological impact lingered. "In the past, when someone asked me about the accident, I couldn't talk about it or even utter any words about it."

As time went by, with the support of his colleagues and family, including his wife who studied psychology, Xu realized that he must move on, not only for himself but for his children. After more than half a year of adjustment, he was finally able to face the past and work as usual.

Since joining the force, Xu Donghua's outstanding performance has earned him numerous honors, including a first-class personal merit, a third-class personal merit and a third prize from the provincial government.



People stroll around a night market on the banks of the Yangtze River in Chongqing on Aug 13. HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Vibrant residents boost night economy in 'furnace city'

CHONGQING — Despite nighttime temperatures hovering above 30 C, the Nanping subdistrict in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality remains bustling, with hotpot restaurants, cafes and bars continuing to thrive.

"The Zhengjie and Houbao blocks in the subdistrict are renowned for their delicious food and diverse cultural activities, attracting people from all walks of life to unwind after work," said Li Bo, Party secretary of the Zhengjie block, adding that these two areas draw an average of 5,000 visitors daily.

Although the metropolis had issued several red alerts for heat, the highest level in the country's color-

coded alert system, people continued to ramble along the riverside, ate hotpot in air-raid shelters and stepped into bars and cafes to enjoy the vibrant nightlife.

This has further fueled the thriving night economy in this southwestern "furnace city".

Last year, Chongqing's total retail sales of consumer goods reached over 1.5 trillion yuan (\$211 billion), with 60 percent of consumption occurring at night.

For four consecutive years, the city has topped the list of China's top 10 cities with the most influential night economies.

In Jiangbei district alone, more than 15,000 shops had been set up in

the night markets as of June, with the nighttime economy reaching approximately 45 billion yuan.

When discussing Chongqing's night economy, night markets and midnight snacks often come to mind first. However, the success of Chongqing's thriving night economy is also due to its continuous transformation and enhancement, which integrates diverse cultural, tourism and entertainment elements into its nighttime leisure offerings.

"Nightlife is not just about dining. We are now working to create diverse consumption scenarios and enrich the overall consumer experience," said Liu Mengmeng, deputy director of the subdistrict

office of Guanyinqiao, a major shopping district in Chongqing.

For instance, night owls not only can enjoy gourmet food, fine drinks and live music, but can also quietly view exhibitions and spend time in a 24-hour library in the popular Jiujie and Beibang blocks.

Zhang Yongwu, director of the municipal commission of commerce, said that Chongqing will continue to provide more high-quality and affordable consumption options, promote the development of its night economy and inject a steady stream of vitality to stimulate consumption.

XINHUA

Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's efforts to achieve carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals.

CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

Adaptability key to nation's environmental progress

Country's ability to swiftly change course has given it edge in green shift

By HOU LIQIANG

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Having engaged with China since 1980, international advocate for green development Martin Lees is a firsthand witness to how the country has transformed over the past 40 years, from being a place with very few high-rise buildings and few private cars to a strong nation seeking to lead the global charge against climate change.

Having traveled to China over 100 times, the former United Nations assistant secretary general possesses a profound understanding of the transformative processes at play when it comes to the environment, highlighting the nation's fundamental shift in economic mindset and how that holds promise for addressing the global climate crisis.

China's extensive experiences in this transformation have positioned it as "absolutely central to having any chance of solving the problem", according to Lees. Its role is particularly crucial in

guiding indebted developing nations toward environmentally sustainable development paths, he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

When Lees first visited China, he was greeted by a scene that would seem like a distant memory in today's modern age in Beijing, which "is hard for young people to imagine".

Towering skyscrapers were few and far between. The streets teemed with a sea of bicycles and horses and carts, he recalled. The absence of private cars was conspicuous, with only a handful of official vehicles navigating the roads.

Back then, "China's priorities were unambiguously economic growth and employment", and "environmental damage was considered to be simply an inevitable cost of economic growth", he said.

Despite the country establishing the National Environmental Protection Agency for environmental governance in 1988, the body didn't have any great power or influence. "It was marginal," he said.

Environmental management was marginalized also because of the mindset around the development trajectory in Western countries, where they grew their economies and then only worried about the environment after they'd become rich.

But Lees gradually saw a consistent change in that way of thinking, as an over-a-decade-long debate continued on the global stage, in which he was personally involved. He tried to make it clear that, "you cannot achieve economic development if you wreck your environment".

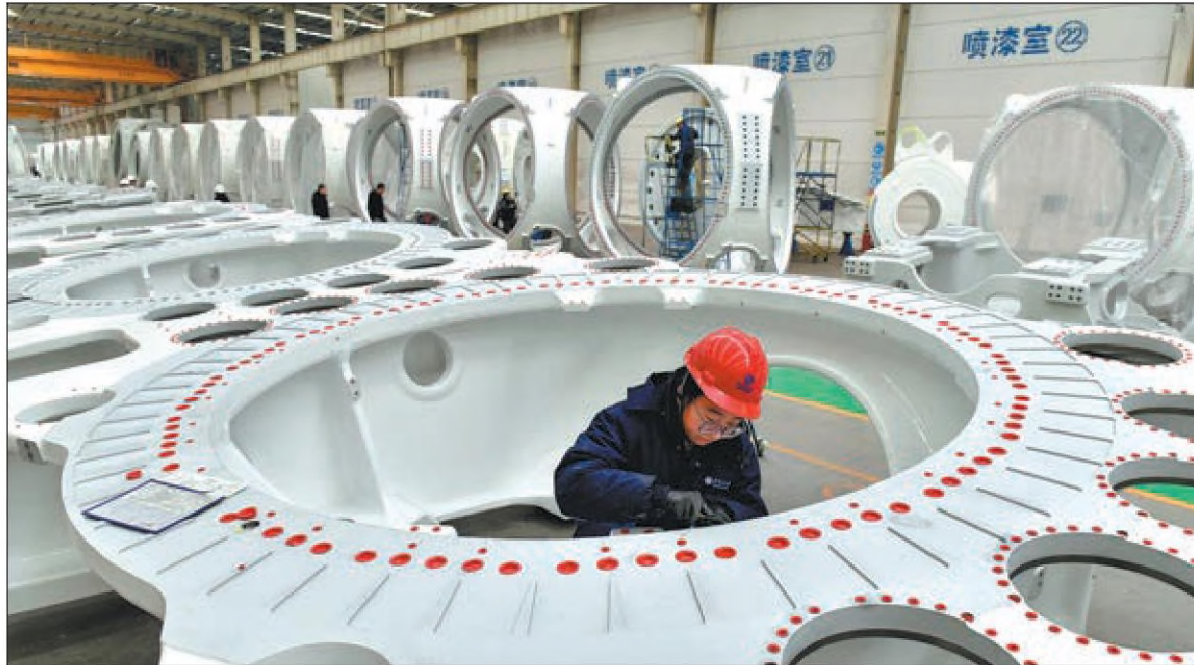
"China has understood that, and is probably the first country to understand that," he said.

The country has understood very well that it is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and the interest of China in solving this problem is not just an international question, but very much a question that affects the success of the domestic economy, he said.

The gradual shift in thinking first saw China upgrade the NEPA to the State Environmental Protection



Martin Lees



Workers paint the base of a wind turbine in Binzhou, Shandong province, in January. GUO XULEI / XINHUA



Electricians inspect a lake-based photovoltaic array in Chuzhou, Anhui province, last month. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY



An oil rig in the Wushi 23-5 oilfield operates in the Beibu Gulf off Leizhou, Guangdong province, in June. The project is an example of a greener exploitation of oil, as it produces no wastewater. HUANG GUOBAO / XINHUA

Administration, "which was a big step-up, but still not as powerful as a ministry", he said.

However, the country was to roll out a lot more measures in the years to come, according to Lees.

"When the issue ever emerged, China took decisions which were, I don't say necessarily unique, but which were very different from the way this problem was handled in other countries," he said.

"Therefore, it was very successful in my opinion, in tackling the climate change question."

Recognizing confronting climate change as an issue that should be built into the whole strategy for eco-

nomical growth, he said, China has adopted an all-of-government mechanism in which a premier-headed leading group consisting of all ministries concerned was established.

The leading group Lees mentioned was launched in 2007 with 30 ministries and commissions as its members. Its remit is to respond to climate change, conserve energy and reduce emissions. Similar leading groups were also set up in all provincial regions across the country.

"So they put the climate issue right at the core of government strategy... I think that was very different from most countries who considered climate to be an environment problem

and put it into the environment ministry where of course there was no power to solve the problem," he said.

Lees described the significant leapfrog in the country's environmental industry following the shift in thinking.

When he proposed the development of an environmental industry to Chinese authorities in the 1990s, "they didn't understand what the hell I was talking about", he said.

But after he talked with officials from the State Environmental Protection Administration, the administration decided to convene a conference themed on this strange term, which resulted in an item in the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-05) to start the process of building environmental industries in China, he said.

Over only a short period, he said solar and wind power, electric vehicles and environmental technologies have become major parts of China's economy.

"I just want to underline how thinking has evolved in China. That shows you that in a very short time, China moved from not understanding the need to do it, to doing it very successfully," he noted.

On the global stage, Lees sighed at the unfavorable developments regarding tackling climate change.

It's clear from a scientific point of view that, despite all the efforts that have been made worldwide, the world has not done much to solve the climate crisis. "We are still increasing the level of emissions, and we are still destabilizing the global climate," he said.

China's role will be essential against this backdrop, and, because climate and the environment are part of a bigger picture, there are very many things that China could do to help the international community to tackle these problems, he stressed.

As the largest user of coal, China is still contributing enormously to the problem in spite of its immense, successful efforts to limit emissions, he said, adding what China does is fundamentally important because of the scale of its impact on the global environment.

He also highlighted the potential role of China in supporting indebted developing nations in their fight to cope with the climate crisis.

The biggest problem now lies in the developing world, in terms of the scale of emissions and the needs of the poor, he said. Investment in green development in developing nations can produce a bigger payoff than the investment in rich countries.

He said there's an opportunity for China, with its enormous experience, to collaborate to help developing states address these problems.

"Frankly, it's essential that China takes a lead on these questions, because you have the knowledge, you have the capability and you have the resources to help," he noted.

"It means you have to combine your immediate economic advantage of selling cheap electric vehicles, such a short-term, immediate trade advantage... with what I would call a longer-term strategic view of solidarity to build a stable world in which human activities can be matched with the capacity of nature to observe our impacts," he said.

This is an opportunity for China to look beyond immediate issues and map out a strategy, he underscored.

"In this respect, you don't just help the developing countries, you help the whole world," he said.

Altay explores renewable energy storage solutions

By ZHAO YIMENG in Altay, Xinjiang
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Altay prefecture in the northern part of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is taking advantage of its natural resources to develop renewable energy, and is fast becoming a hub for wind and solar projects.

While the region is traditionally known for livestock farming, with cattle and sheep roaming its vast grasslands, Altay's rise to prominence as a leader in clean energy is contributing to the region's economic development.

Figures released by Altay show that it ranks third in Xinjiang for hydropower, with a capacity of 4.84 million kilowatts, and fourth for both wind energy, with a potential capacity of 39.5 million kilowatts, and solar power, which can generate up to 505.5 million kilowatts.

Wang Shaojie, deputy director of the prefecture's development and reform bureau, said that as of July, Altay's total power generation reached 7.78 billion kilowatt-hours,

with green electricity making up 92.7 percent of the output. Half of the energy produced in Altay is exported to other parts of the country, he said.

Therein lies an issue for the prefecture, in that due to its sparse population and lack of industrial demand, it produces more green energy than it needs. As a result, renewable projects in the prefecture are pursuing ways of better storing electricity, more efficiently exporting electricity to places outside the prefecture and smart management in power generation.

China General Nuclear Power Corporation's Jeminay Integrated Energy Project in Altay is looking into new ways to address the issues around solar and wind energy's intermittence and unpredictability by developing smart grid management, storage and load distribution solutions.

Xu Yong, deputy director of operations at CGN New Energy's Xinjiang branch, said power grids in China operate mainly on a "supply-

follows-demand" model, where the power supply increases as demand grows. However, this model has struggled to cope with the fluctuating nature of wind energy.

"Our integrated system aims to ensure better alignment between supply and demand while maximizing the use of clean energy. It helps mitigate the volatility of renewable energy production, ensuring a more stable and efficient power grid," Xu said.

The project's construction scale is 400,000 kilowatts, with 390,000 kilowatts coming from wind power and 10,000 kilowatts from solar power. It began construction in August 2022 and was connected to the grid at the end of last year.

Once fully operational, the project is expected to generate 1.26 billion kilowatt-hours of clean energy annually, equivalent to reducing standard coal consumption by approximately 380,000 tons and carbon dioxide emissions by 1.25 million tons, he added.

Pumped storage has become a



Wind power is generated on the mountains of Altay, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

ZHAO YIMENG / CHINA DAILY

good method for managing excess clean energy in Altay, as water can be pumped to a higher reservoir while there is low electricity demand and released to generate power during peak times.

Zuo Xingcheng, project manager of a pumped storage power station in Burqin, said that using water and gravity is an effective storage solution. "The project acts like a giant power bank, storing green electrici-

ty generated from wind and sunlight for peak times of consumption," he said.

Once operational next year, it will significantly enhance the regional power grid's capacity and facilitate the consumption of renewable energy, saving approximately 727,000 tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by about 2.19 million tons annually, Zuo said.

The region plans to support key enterprises and industrial parks in increasing their green energy consumption ratios, while attracting high-energy load industries regarding big data and computing infrastructure to enhance clean energy absorption, he said.

Excess renewable energy is being used to support the recent increase in tourism to Altay on the back of the popular TV series *To the Wonder*, which is set in the prefecture.

Jilin New Village in Hababe county, where an iconic scene of the series takes place, has seen a significant increase in tourists since the show's debut in May. The State Grid's power supply company in the county has taken steps to ensure safe and reliable electricity for the village's guesthouses.

Hasarjan Ahmetnur's local hometown has been upgraded so that it can accommodate up to 150 guests per day. "Clean energy is powering the region," he said.

The State Grid's power supply company in Altay is ramping up investments in electricity facilities for attractions such as Koktokay Ski Resort to ensure that the infrastructure can support the thriving and ever-increasing green tourism.

In Kanas and Hemu scenic areas in Burqin county, heating and cooking facilities have been made electric, and electric-powered shuttle buses and boats are now operational, according to an employee of the company.

Zhang Guohua, head of the Hemu power supply station, said over 1,000 households solely use green energy following a switch from coal in 2020. "Green power has injected strong momentum into the growth of Hemu village," he said.

Given Altay's sparse population and few large industrial users, maximizing clean energy consumption remains a challenge. The key lies in effectively storing and utilizing wind and solar energy, which are plentiful but intermittent, Xu said.

WORLD

California leaders hail 75 years of China's progress

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco and RENALI in Los Angeles

Officials and community leaders in the San Francisco Bay Area gathered to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, highlighting the nation's remarkable achievements and emphasizing the importance of people-to-people exchanges between the United States and China.

Chinese Consul-General in San Francisco Zhang Jianmin addressed guests at a reception held at the Chinese Consulate General on Thursday night, praising China's progress over the past 75 years.

"The Chinese people have achieved two miracles: rapid economic growth and long-term social stability, making a historic leap from poverty to prosperity," Zhang said.

This year also marks the 45th anniversary of China-US diplomatic relations. Despite challenges, the relationship has progressed, benefiting both nations and contributing to global peace and prosperity, said Zhang.

The summit between the leaders of the two countries in San Francisco last November established a "San Francisco Vision" for the future of bilateral relations, Zhang said, emphasizing the need to promote people-to-people exchanges and strengthen subnational cooperation to "inject vitality into China-US relations".

California Governor Gavin Newsom sent a congratulatory letter, reflecting on his visit to China last October. He expressed gratitude for the ongoing partnership in addressing climate change and advancing people-to-people exchanges.

"California and China have enjoyed a meaningful relationship built on shared goals as well as our shared past. As we mark this year's National Day, may the bonds between our peoples and cultures continue to endure and prosper," said Newsom in the letter.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed also sent a congratulatory letter, expressing gratitude to Consul-General Zhang and his wife for their support of San Francisco's Chinese community. Breed noted the city's celebration of its 45-year sister-city relationship with Shanghai, which has deepened economic, cultural, and educational ties.

Paul McEntire, board member and CFO of the Global Green

Development Alliance, shared his insights from his recent five-week trip to China. "The infrastructure development is pretty amazing, particularly the high-speed rail. It was quite different from my first visit there, which was 30 years ago," he told China Daily.

McEntire's organization has been collaborating with Chinese counterparts on green development and "smart village" projects, aimed at assisting poorer rural areas in China in deploying green technologies.

Steve Harnsberger, the founder of People-to-People-Exchange, a nonprofit organization, emphasized the importance of "cultural diplomacy".

With over 20 years of experience leading cultural exchange programs in China, Harnsberger highlighted the significance of individual efforts in fostering friendship and peace between nations.

At another reception in Los Angeles on Wednesday, Chinese Consul-General in LA Guo Shaochun said that California and China have deepened their exchanges and fostered greater mutual understanding through a variety of initiatives and collaborations over the past year.

Significant events such as the China-California Business Forum, the return of China's giant pandas Yun Chuan and Xin Bao to the San Diego Zoo, and the establishment of green shipping corridors between the Port of Shanghai and the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach showcase the tangible achievements of the cooperative efforts, noted the envoy.

Leticia Perez, a member of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, noted that US perceptions of China are often simplistic.

"Americans' view about China still tend to be based on a black-and-white thinking, a colorless thinking about our number one global trade partner," she told the gathering.

Robert Hertzberg, former speaker of the California State Assembly and former majority leader of the California State Senate, who recently joined the 2024 Legislators Forum for Friendly Exchanges in Shanghai, said: "It's crucial for both sides to collaborate in building understanding and getting along, grounded in trust and respect during these difficult times."

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Casting vote

Voters wait in line outside a polling station to vote in the presidential election in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Saturday. Election commission data on Sunday show that Anura Kumara Dissanayake, leader of the National People's Power, won the election. The commission said on its website that Dissanayake, 55, won the presidency with 42.31 percent of the votes. Sajith Premadasa of the Samagi Jana Balawega took the second place with 32.76 percent.

GABRIELLE FONSECA JOHNSON / REUTERS

UN adopts Pact for the Future

By MINLU ZHANG at the United Nations minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

The Summit of the Future opened at United Nations headquarters in New York on Sunday, with the adoption of a Pact for the Future, the most wide-ranging international agreement in many years.

The pact, which also includes the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, was adopted by members without a vote at the start of the two-day summit.

The summit precedes the high-level debate of the General Assembly next week. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will deliver speeches at both events.

"We stand at a crossroads of global transformation, facing unprecedented challenges that demand urgent, collective action," Philemon Yang, president of the UN General Assembly, said at the opening segment of the summit.

"Our multilateral tools and institutions are unable to respond effectively to today's political, economic, environmental and technological challenges," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his speech to open

the summit. "And tomorrow's will be even more difficult and even more dangerous."

Guterres said the current framework is not suitable for today's crises.

"When the United Nations was established nearly 80 years ago, it had 51 member states. Today, there are 193. The global economy was less than one-twelfth of its current size. As a result, our peace and security tools and institutions, and our global financial architecture, reflect a bygone era.

"The Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations open pathways to new possibilities and opportunities," he said.

The 42-page pact covers a broad range of issues, including peace and security, sustainable development, climate change, digital cooperation, human rights, gender, youth and future generations, and the transformation of global governance. It outlines 56 broad actions that countries have pledged to achieve.

The uncertainty and tension surrounding the final decision on the pact were high. To prepare for any scenario, Guterres had drafted three

different speeches — one for each possible outcome: approval, rejection or an ambiguous result, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, The Associated Press reported.

The pact features the most reform measures for the Security Council since the 1960s, with plans to improve the effectiveness and representation of the body, particularly addressing the underrepresentation of Africa, which has no permanent seat.

It marks the first multilateral commitment to nuclear disarmament in more than a decade, with dedication to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

The pact calls for reform of the international financial architecture to better represent and serve developing countries.

The Global Digital Compact is the first comprehensive framework for digital cooperation and AI governance and calls for taking into account future generations in the UN's decision-making.

In 2020, the year of the UN's 75th anniversary, a global dialogue on the future was opened, leading to the Summit of the Future.

China, in a position paper for the Summit of the Future and the 79th session of the General Assembly, recognizes that "changes unseen in a century are unfolding at an accelerated pace".

China says it remains dedicated to safeguarding global peace, promoting common development, fostering intercultural progress, contributing to the reform of global governance, and advancing scientific and technological innovations for the benefit of humanity.

To face the new era and new questions, China says in the position paper that its answer is "building a community with a shared future for mankind".

"China supports the UN Summit of the Future, and calls on the international community to take this opportunity to focus on the common well-being of humanity, build consensus and synergy, and support the central role of the UN in international affairs.

"China supports efforts of true multilateralism ... based on international law, in accordance with the principle of equity and justice, in pursuit of win-win cooperation ... so as to jointly build a better future for mankind."

Argentina's local economy gets Chinese investment boost

By JIMENA ESTEBAN in Buenos Aires, Argentina jimena@chinadailyusa.com

China's strong relationship with Argentina is increasingly felt locally, particularly in the more underdeveloped provinces, boosting the local economies, experts said.

Northern provinces like Salta, Jujuy, Catamarca, and Tucuman, are on the periphery of Argentina's national economy. To address this problem, Argentina's northern provinces have been particularly active in engaging directly with China, aware that Chinese investment represents crucial support.

"The northern provinces have been lagging behind the central provinces of the country. They often have fragile primary production structures," said Stella Juste, a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina.

"However, they have found a point of complementarity with China's interests in the region," she said. "This is extremely relevant for the future of bilateral relations and especially for the economic development of these provinces."

These relationships and connectivity investments are often fueled by China's Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI has played a key role in extending the depth of China's relationships in Latin America.

Direct efforts by provinces to ramp up their links to China have seen some success. Many have secured Chinese backing for projects, including the Cauchari Solar Park in Jujuy, the largest in Latin America, and the Cafayate Solar Park.

Catamarca and San Juan leveraged their links to China to develop wind farms, said Sebastian Schulz, a researcher at Argentina's National University of La Plata.

"These projects have been accompanied by the creation of genuine jobs, the construction of connectivity networks, and the influx of essential foreign currency for the country," said Schulz, an expert on Chinese studies.

Schulz also linked the growth in renewable energy projects in Argentina's northern provinces to China's new development concepts, which include internationalization and the promotion of low-carbon industries for the next three decades.

Since participating in the BRI in February 2022, the membership has helped Argentina strengthen its relationship with China and has benefited individual provinces.

Such projects have allowed Jujuy to diversify its production base and become a net producer of renewable energy. This is partly a result of the province's connection with PowerChina, a developer of power stations around the globe, helping to build

and operate the Cauchari Solar Park. Meanwhile, Argentina is the fourth-largest lithium producer globally, with up to a third of the value it derives from lithium coming from exports to China.

Jujuy, Salta, and Catamarca provinces are the centers of the country's lithium industry. Last year, more than 40 percent of Argentina's lithium exports went to China, compared to 9 percent to the US, reported El Pais.

Between 2020 and 2023, Chinese companies invested \$3.2 billion in mining projects in Argentina, including seven lithium projects, it said, citing government data.

"China's actions in Argentina, and Latin America in general, are complex and marked by a diverse presence on the ground. This is a notable characteristic of the relationship," Juste said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Private sector injects impetus into FOCAC cooperation

By NDUMISO MLILO in Johannesburg, South Africa ndumiso@chinadailyusa.com

The private sector, including people-to-people exchanges, has become an increasingly important part of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation over the past 24 years since its establishment, injecting new impetus into China-Africa relations, according to experts.

"FOCAC is maturing and evolving, what started as a state-to-state engagement is now decentralized to include nonstate actors," said Philani Mthembu, executive director at the Institute for Global Dialogue, a South Africa-based think tank.

"We are seeing some increase in the Chinese private sector, not only in the foreign direct investment, but also making financing commitments toward Africa. We are seeing small and medium enterprises from Africa looking to have access to funding their enterprises from

China. We are seeing an evolution of the relationship which started at a state-to-state level."

Mthembu made these remarks during an interview with China Daily on the sidelines of a seminar organized by the Institute for Global Dialogue, the Chinese embassy in South Africa and the University of Johannesburg on Thursday.

He said that FOCAC, since its founding in 2000, has helped strengthen people-to-people relations, with its spread reaching universities, think tanks and academics.

Many students from different African countries have received scholarships from the Chinese government to study in China while many infrastructure projects have been completed by Chinese companies in Africa.

The Chinese enterprises have constructed or refurbished parliaments in Liberia, Mozambique, Seychelles, Guinea and Zimbabwe. Mthembu said that in the past

there were big infrastructure projects linking African countries, but now Africans are witnessing projects linking rural and urban areas. There are now investments in small infrastructure, including energy projects, in rural areas, Mthembu said.

Speaking during the seminar on Thursday, Wu Peng, Chinese ambassador to South Africa, said the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was successful with "pragmatic" outcomes. He said that China will expand vocational training for African countries in various skills to create jobs. China will continue to build industrial parks and support Africa's industrialization for sustainable development of the continent, said Wu.

Mandira Bagwande, lecturer at the Stellenbosch University in South Africa, said the deals signed with South Africa will immensely benefit the country.

She said, "The elevation of relations with China to strategic relations

demonstrates how far China values the region in geopolitics. FOCAC has evolved as relations have evolved."

Bagwande said Africa should consider cooperating with China on the next-generation technologies which will have a huge impact on the development of African countries. She said African countries should leverage China's expertise in artificial intelligence, big data, and digital industrialization.

Speaking to the media on Friday in Pretoria, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, South African minister in the Presidency, said the Cabinet has noted the FOCAC decisions and outcomes of the state visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to China during the FOCAC summit.

She said the two countries reached cooperation agreements in a wide range of areas, including trade, electric vehicles and renewable energy.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Snow time



Local residents build a snowman on a snow-covered sports field in Warden, Free State Province, South Africa, on Saturday. Heavy snowfall caused major disruption on South Africa's roads on Saturday with people still stranded at midday after spending the night stuck in their vehicles. WIKUS DE WET / AFP

WORLD

Military might



Iran holds a military parade in Teheran on Saturday. During the event, Iran unveiled its latest homegrown precision strike long-range ballistic missile and kamikaze drone, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. It marked the beginning of the Sacred Defense Week, commemorating the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the report said. SHADATI / XINHUA

US tariffs on China may backfire, experts warn

'Counterproductive' measures isolate itself and add to consumers' burden

By YIFAN XU in Washington
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The high tariffs imposed by the United States on China have been isolating itself on trade-related issues, experts say.

"At the end of the day, the US will, in the long term, hurt itself," said Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington. "The tariffs will isolate the US on trade-related issues."

On Sept 13, the US Trade Representative confirmed that tariffs on hundreds of products, including electric vehicles and EV batteries, semiconductors and solar cells, would be raised following proposals from the White House and a review by the representative under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

The tariff on Chinese EVs will be increased from 25 percent to 100 percent within two weeks, and a 25 percent tariff will be imposed on Chinese EV batteries, the representative said. Reuters reported that Lael Brainard, the top White House economic adviser, said the decision was made to ensure the US EV industry diversifies away from China's dominant supply chain.

Gupta said the charge that China takes part in unfair competition is "a false argument". The US is not a competitive player in this industry and is seeking to incubate a domestic EV sector dominated by US players rather than Chinese ones, he said. "And that is the reason these tariffs have been imposed."

Tariffs are counterproductive to boosting the competitiveness of US EVs in the global market, he added.

"To become the most competitive player in EVs, you need to create the most competitive marketplace. By blocking out the most competitive cars, which are Chinese cars, from its marketplace, the US is hurting itself in the long term."

China, he said, will produce EVs both domestically and internationally, making it "super competitive globally". In contrast, the US is

relying on "these protectionist measures" to ensure that US EV makers dominate the domestic market, which will leave them uncompetitive internationally.

In the latest action, Chinese lithium-ion batteries not used for EVs will face a 25 percent tariff from 2026. Solar cells and semiconductors will incur a 50 percent tariff starting in 2025 and 2026, respectively.

Gupta said the US is already lagging behind China in the solar and photovoltaic sectors. Similar to the EV industry, the US has imposed high tariffs to give the domestic manufacturers some breathing room to capture a portion of the market. However, he said it will "never" be able to compete internationally.

In sectors such as semiconductors, these tariffs mostly relate to legacy products, he said.

"Because at the high end, at the competitive end, the American strategy is through export controls rather than tariffs," he said. "The way to do that is through export controls to deny China the chance to catch up with it."

Domestic capacity

He explained that most areas where tariffs are imposed are those in which the US is not as competitive as China. By imposing tariffs, the US hopes to create domestic manufacturing capacity in these industries.

Chris Pereira, founder and CEO of iMPact, a communications and business consulting group, said these tariffs defy market principles, contradict economic wisdom and negatively affect the US market and consumers.

"The US should maintain its openness and competitive edge to preserve its long-term global influence. History has shown that the world still moves on when a country closes its doors," Pereira said.

Chinese companies, with their long-term vision, see opportunities worldwide, he said.

"Mexico and Indonesia each have one-third of the US popula-

tion, and the total population of South American countries exceeds that of the US, proving that the US is not the only market," he said.

"Don't let policy hinder the way of progress."

Gupta said US businesses and industries understand the value of competitive marketplaces, with most understanding that tariffs effectively turn out to be a tax ultimately paid by consumers. As a result, they have opposed tariffs for a long time, viewing them as a form of deadweight that does not stimulate investment or enhance competitiveness.

He said a fair amount of academic work has emerged demonstrating the ineffectiveness of tariffs since former US president Donald Trump imposed them.

For example, the concept of "friend-shoring", proposed by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in 2022, is said to build more resilient supply chains by using tariffs to limit networks to allies and friendly countries.

"What has happened is that the supply chain has just gotten lengthened," Gupta said. "Instead of the product being produced in China and exported to the US, the final product is now assembled, maybe in Vietnam or Mexico, but it still involves Chinese inputs."

Consequently, the supply chain has become less resilient, not more, he said.

In addition, increased US tariffs targeting China are actually leading to a "virtuous process" for Chinese manufacturers, pushing them to invest abroad and learn how to set up factories overseas, he said, emphasizing that it is the trend that China's share of global goods is on the rise.

"These tariffs are coming back to hurt the US in a very big way, both in the medium and long term. They are making the US an uncompetitive producer and adding to consumers' costs," he said.

These measures complicate business decision-making and, in the long run, will enable China to diversify its foreign direct investment while strengthening ties with European countries, he said.

France gets new govt after deadlock

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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French President Emmanuel Macron named a new right-leaning government on Saturday, led by Prime Minister Michel Barnier, nearly three months after the inconclusive elections in which a left-wing alliance won the most seats.

The 39-member cabinet is mainly composed of ministers from Macron's centrist alliance and the conservative Republicans party.

Despite the poor performance of Barnier's Republicans party in the elections, Macron appointed the 73-year-old former chief negotiator for the European Union on Brexit as prime minister earlier this month. The new cabinet, approved by Macron, was put together by Barnier after difficult negotiations.

Tough talks on the distribution of cabinet posts continued right until Saturday's official announcement, marked by moments of high tension between Macron and Barnier, French news outlet France 24 reported.

In the June-July snap elections, which Macron called in the wake of a far-right victory in the European Parliament elections, the left-wing alliance, called the New Popular Front, won the most seats but failed to secure a majority and was

denied a chance to form a minority government.

On Saturday, Jean-Luc Melenchon, leader of the New Popular Front, called the new cabinet "a government of the general election losers". He said France should "get rid" of the new government "as soon as possible".

Even before the announcement, thousands of people took to the streets of Paris and other French cities on Saturday in a left-wing protest to denounce what they called a denial of July's election results.

Olivier Faure, head of the Socialist Party, described the new cabinet as "a reactionary government that gives Democracy the finger".

The far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen has no seats in the new cabinet.

Jordan Bardella, the new leader of the National Rally, condemned the new government shortly after the announcement.

The new government marks "a return to Macronism" and has "no future whatsoever", he said.

Jean-Noel Barrot, 41, has been named the new foreign minister, after serving as junior minister for European affairs since February and before that as Macron's minister for digital affairs.

His father Jacques Barrot, a prominent French politician, served

in various ministerial posts and also as a European commissioner.

"Good with a new French foreign minister with a deep background in both European and digital affairs," Carl Bildt, co-chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations and a former Swedish prime minister, wrote on X.

Antoine Armand, 33, who is former member of the National Assembly, will be the new minister for economy, finance and industrial and digital sovereignty. He is the youngest to hold the position in the country's recent history.

Sebastien Lecornu, 38, a close ally of Macron, has kept his job as defense minister.

No confidence threat

Barnier's hard-won new government faced pressure from day one on Sunday as threats of a no-confidence motion in parliament multiplied.

To pass, a no-confidence motion needs an absolute majority in parliament, which would then force the government to step down immediately — currently an unlikely scenario as the far right and the leftist bloc, sworn enemies, would have to vote in unison.

The first major challenge for Barnier will be on Oct 1, when he is expected to deliver his general policy speech before the parliament. He is also expected to soon submit a 2025 budget plan to address the country's dire financial situation.

Last week, Barnier called the situation "very serious", clearly referring to the public sector deficit that is projected to hit 5.6 percent of GDP this year and go even higher next year, also beyond the EU's limit.

"After the left won the elections, French citizens end up with the most far-right, unqualified, and conservative government ever nominated," Julien Migozzi, a research fellow at Oxford University, said on X. "This coup, decided by Macron, will further damage trust in electoral processes and democratic institutions, all for Le Pen's benefits."



People march during a demonstration against the "Macron-Barnier" government in Paris on Saturday. DIMITAR DILKOFF / AFP

Agencies contributed to this story.

Briefly

IRAN Coal mine blast leaves 51 dead

A gas explosion in a coal mine in eastern Iran has killed at least 51 people and injured 20, state media reported on Sunday. The accident was caused by a methane gas explosion in the mine run by the Madanjoo company, state media said. Ali Akbar Rahimi, governor of South Khorasan Province, told state TV that this region supplies 76 percent of the country's coal and is home to about 8 to 10 major companies, including Madanjoo. The explosion occurred at 9 pm on Saturday, state media said. President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed condolences to the victims' families. "I spoke with ministers and we will do our best to

follow up," Pezeshkian said in televised comments.

UNITED STATES 4 killed in Alabama late night shooting

A mass shooting involving several assailants has left at least four people dead and dozens wounded in Birmingham, Alabama, police said on Saturday. "We believe that multiple shooters fired multiple shots on a group of people" in the Five Points South district just after 11 pm, police officer Truman Fitzgerald told local media. Officers found two men and one woman on the sidewalk suffering from gunshot wounds, Fitzgerald said. All three were pronounced dead at the scene. A fourth victim died at a local hospital, he added.

Trump rejects 2nd debate against Harris

Donald Trump on Saturday rejected a second debate against Kamala Harris before the Nov 5 election, saying it was "too late" with early voting already underway in some states. Earlier in the day, Harris' campaign said she had accepted an invitation from CNN to participate in a debate on Oct 23. It would have been the candidates' second debate after the Sept 10 encounter. Trump stuck to his previous position that there would not be another debate before voters go to the polls in November. "It's just too late. Voting has already started," he said at a campaign rally in the battleground state of North Carolina.

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BUSINESS

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Trade in services experiencing exponential growth

Confidence in China's economic development and increasing openness rising

By ZHONG NAN
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For Koh Poh-Yian, senior vice-president of FedEx Express and president of FedEx China, 2024 is undoubtedly shaping up to be a busy year.

The United States-based logistics service provider launched two new flights to the US from Qingdao, Shandong province, and Xiamen, Fujian province, in June, and expanded its fast cross-border shipping services for parcels heading to the US and Europe from China in July.

"This year also marks the 40th anniversary of our operations in China," said Koh. "Since 1984, FedEx has been committed to expanding its logistics network and service portfolio to support the growth of China's supply chain and trade in services."

In contrast to goods trade, trade in services refers to the sales and delivery of intangible services like transportation, tourism, telecommunications, advertising, education, computing and accounting.

With multinational corporations such as FedEx, Denmark's Maersk Line and France's CMA CGM Group all expanding their logistics capabilities in China this year, their expansion is reflective of a broader trend in China's trade in services, a sector that has experienced exponential growth.

In 1982, during the early stages of reform and opening-up, China's services trade had a total value of just over \$4 billion. By 2023, this figure had jumped to \$933.1 billion, a 233-fold increase, data from the Ministry of Commerce show.

As global value chains undergo restructuring, market watchers said that both Chinese and foreign companies are positioning themselves to capitalize on growing demand for services such as innovation, finance, logistics, marketing and branding.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said China's continued efforts to expand its opening-up will position trade in services as a key engine for sustaining economic growth and cultivating new competitive advantages in the coming years.

China's dedication to enhancing the quality of its manufacturing sector is anticipated to boost demand for services in areas such as innovation, equipment maintenance, technical expertise, information, professional support and design, said Wang.

This will stimulate the development of new business models, industries and operational approaches, both domestically and globally, she added.

Shenyang North Aircraft Maintenance Co Ltd, a subsidiary of State-owned China Southern Airlines, is a typical example of a company benefiting from China's service trade growth, leveraging its expertise in auxiliary power unit maintenance



Visitors check out a colored lantern at the Sichuan province exhibition stand during the 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing on Sept 12. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY



Left: A visitor takes pictures of an artificial intelligence orthopedic surgery robot during the 2024 CIFTIS in Beijing on Sept 12. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY Right: A visitor experiences a passenger-carrying autonomous aerial vehicle during the 2024 CIFTIS in Beijing on Sept 13. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY



75 years on

to tap into new markets.

The Shenyang, Liaoning province-based aircraft parts maintenance and overhaul service provider saw its sales revenue from aircraft APU maintenance surge 15.9 percent year-on-year to 438 million yuan (\$62.06 million) in the first eight months, marking five consecutive years of rapid growth, said Shenyang Customs.

"With a capacity to repair 245 APU units annually, we are able to provide services for six types of APUs, including those for Airbus A320 series aircraft and Boeing 737NG planes," said Wang Lulu, a senior engineer at Shenyang North Aircraft Maintenance. "Since 2022, we have serviced 36 APUs from countries and regions

including Europe, the US and Southeast Asia, generating sales revenue of 123 million yuan. Our overseas maintenance services have emerged as a new growth driver for the company."

The value of China's trade in services grew by 10 percent year-on-year to 6.57 trillion yuan in 2023, said the Ministry of Commerce.

This momentum has continued in the first seven months, with China's total value of services trade growing 14.7 percent on a yearly basis to 4.23 trillion yuan.

To further open up its services sector and facilitate convenient cross-border flow of various innovation elements, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released a policy document in early September regarding promotion of the development of trade in services through high-standard opening-up. They are crucial to supporting the expansion of companies like

FedEx and Shenyang North Aircraft Maintenance.

The guideline addressed key points in supporting the development of trade in services and is expected to encourage an innovative environment for the growth of the sector.

Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has been fulfilling its commitments, accelerating the opening-up of its services sector to the outside world, and successfully boosting trade in services, said Tang Wenhong, assistant minister of commerce.

Tang said that the government will fully implement the negative list for cross-border services trade, establish and improve the management system for the list, and strengthen links between various administrative approvals, licenses, filings and negative list adjustments.

A negative list refers to specific

areas of industry where foreign investors are not allowed to operate. They can operate in areas not appearing on the list.

"Since China's manufacturing investment and goods trade have remained at a high level, trade in services plays an even more important role to drive high-quality economic growth and new quality productive forces," said Jiang Hao, a partner at global management consultancy Roland Berger.

New quality productive forces are advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth modes and productivity development paths, featuring high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and are in line with the new development philosophy.

Jiang noted that the top three categories of China's trade in services are tourism, transportation and other business services. They account for 60 percent of the

nation's total services trade, while most developed countries' trade in services focuses on knowledge and technology-based areas.

"This means China has a lot of potential to expand services trade, particularly as more Chinese companies are going overseas and seeking high-end services to go along with them," he said, adding that as China continues promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and contributing to the growth of the Global South, services trade will be even more critical to help domestic firms achieve their goals.

Similar views were expressed by Mohammed al Ajlan, deputy chairman of Ajlan & Bros Group, a Saudi Arabia-based conglomerate. "Since entering the Chinese market, we have witnessed tremendous change and maintain long-term confidence in China's high-quality economic development and increasing openness, especially in the areas of trade in services and technology growth," he said.

With closer China-Saudi political and business ties, the deep integration of the BRI and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 program between Saudi and Chinese companies will deepen and solidify, said al Ajlan.

"We aim to facilitate the implementation of advanced concepts, technologies, products and services in Saudi Arabia through platforms such as the China International Fair for Trade in Services," he said. Al Ajlan is also chairman of the Saudi-Chinese Business Council.

China and Belarus also signed a trade agreement in services and investment in August, said the Ministry of Commerce. The agreement is poised to further unlock the potential for cooperation in these fields and support high-quality development of the BRI.

Attracted by China's high-level opening-up, culture and quality education service, Duke Kunshan University, a joint venture of Duke University in the US, Wuhan University in Hubei province and Kunshan, a city in Jiangsu province, witnessed its largest undergraduate class this year, up 25 percent from the previous year and doubling the size of its inaugural undergraduate class in 2018.

About 350 students are from China, with about 150 being international — a 50 percent increase over the previous year, doubling the size of its inaugural undergraduate class in 2018.

This year, the university received the highest number of international applications, with over 4,700 applicants from 123 countries competing for 150 spots. About half of these applicants were from the US, according to John Quelch, executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University.

"I believe that DKU will help me achieve my goals by not only immersing myself in Chinese culture, but also broadening my perspective through other students, faculty and courses," said Sara Salazar, a class of 2028 student from Texas, the US.

From 2013 to 2023, the average annual growth rate of global services exports reached 4.9 percent, which doubled the average growth rate for the world's goods exports, said the World Trade Organization.

Nation's evolving outbound tourism market

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhong Nan

In early March, my college classmate, who now works at a foreign trade company in Cixi, Zhejiang province, booked a two-night stay at a hotel in Singapore to attend a Taylor Swift concert.

It wasn't just the people sitting in the same row of the plane who were headed to the concert at the Southeast Asian country's national stadium. She quickly noticed that many passengers on her flight were also going to watch the show, as they all talked about the same topic on board.

Many of them bought sequin dresses in China before the depar-

ture and made friendship bracelets. Young people also joined with fans from other parts of the world to attend pre-concert meetings, tailgating events or hanging out at nearby restaurants and bars to share the excitement.

This highlights a broader trend within China's rapidly growing trade in services sector, particularly in areas like tourism and cultural experiences.

As disposable incomes rise and the demand for international events and services increases, more Chinese consumers are traveling abroad, not only for business, but also for leisure activities.

This surge in outbound tourism reflects the broader expansion of China's services sector. It has seen significant growth in areas like tourism, logistics and professional services, becoming an integral part of the

nation's economic transformation.

China's travel services continued to grow at a high rate in the first seven months of 2024, with revenue in the sector reaching 1.14 trillion yuan (\$161.5 billion), an increase of 48.5 percent year-on-year. This made it the largest sector in China's trade in services, statistics from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

The rapid growth of China's travel services sector, driven by rising disposable incomes and increasing demand for international events, brings significant benefits to the global economy.

As more Chinese consumers travel abroad for leisure, such as outdoor activities and cultural events, they contribute to the economies of the destination countries.

The influx of Chinese tourists can boost local businesses, including hospitality, retail, aviation,

cruises and entertainment events, driving demand for various products and creating job opportunities.

Moreover, Chinese outbound tourism fosters cross-cultural exchanges and strengthens global economic ties, particularly in countries heavily reliant on tourism revenue. Destinations in Southeast Asia, Europe and North America, in particular, benefit from increased spending on accommodation, dining and shopping by Chinese tourists.

The surge in international travel also highlights the importance of global cooperation in catering businesses, logistics and infrastructure, as it demands efficient transportation networks and cross-border services.

For example, Chinese companies such as State-owned China Railway

Construction Corp and China Communications Construction Co have all undertaken railroad and airport construction projects in numerous countries in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

As China expands its trade in services, this deeper integration into the global economy strengthens trade partnerships, drives growth in related industries and contributes to the overall development of a more interconnected global services market.

Based on these facts, the next growth stage of China's outbound tourism market could be characterized by increased demand for more personalized, high-quality travel experiences, as well as a shift toward niche segments such as eco-tourism, adventure travel, sport tourism and cultural exploration.

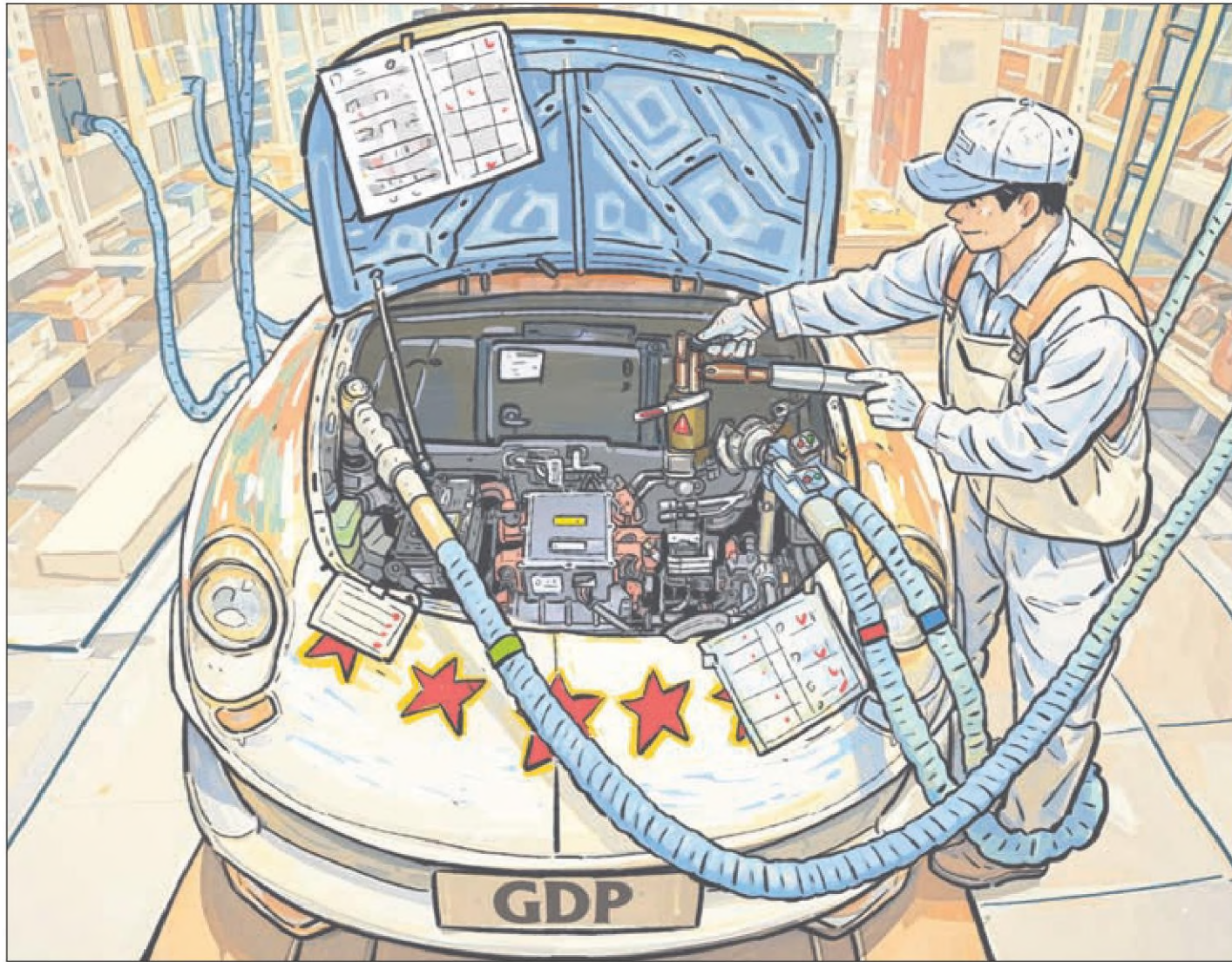
As Chinese consumers become more affluent and sophisticated, they are seeking unique and immersive experiences rather than standard group tours. This transition is

likely to drive the development of luxury travel, high-end food and wine tasting, wellness tourism and specialized services tailored to individual preferences, providing opportunities for destinations and service providers to cater to this evolving market.

Another key trend in the next phase of China's outbound tourism will be the expansion into lesser-known and visa-free destinations, beyond the traditional hotspots in Southeast Asia and Europe. Chinese tourists will increasingly explore regions like Africa, the Middle East, South America and Central Asia, offering these emerging markets the chance to tap into a lucrative source of tourism revenue.

For the global economy, this evolution in China's outbound tourism means increased demand for diversified services that will spur investment in infrastructure, technology and sustainable initiatives in tourism-heavy regions.

BUSINESSINSIGHT



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Keys to achieving China's annual economic growth target of 5%

Expansionary fiscal and monetary policies needed to alleviate deflationary pressures

EAGLE EYE

By Yu Yongding

To assess whether we can reach the annual economic growth target, we first need a reasonable analytical framework. Using the simplest expenditure method to analyze the possibility of achieving around 5 percent GDP growth in 2024, we must consider the three main components of economic growth: final consumption, capital formation, and net exports. We also need to make reasonable assumptions about the growth rates of these components.

In 2023, China's final consumption grew by about 8 percent, contributing 82 percent to the 5.2 percent GDP growth. This high consumption growth was mainly due to the base effect. Assuming that consumption growth will drop to around 5 percent in 2024 and that the trade surplus holds flat, we can conclude that to achieve around 5 percent annual GDP growth, the required growth rate for capital formation should hit 5.3 percent, higher than the 3.5 percent growth in 2023.

During the January-April period, China's retail sales, a key measurement of consumer spending, grew by 4.1 percent year-on-year. This indicates that to reach the annual growth target, capital formation growth in 2024 will need to exceed the initially set 5.3 percent.

The growth in property investment in the first half of the year was weaker than expected. However, the manufacturing sector exceeded expectations due to the rapid growth of industries like new energy vehicles. In the first quarter, manufacturing investment growth reached 9.9 percent, somewhat offsetting the negative impacts of low consumption growth and the declining real estate sector on GDP growth. Nonetheless, it is clear that infrastructure investment growth in the second half of the year should be significantly higher than initially assumed. Only then can China likely achieve its annual GDP growth target for the year.

For a long time, China's producer price index, which gauges factory-gate prices, has registered negative growth. Meanwhile, the growth of China's consumer

price index, the main gauge of inflation, has fluctuated around 2 percent, even experiencing negative growth at times. In this context, it is necessary to implement expansionary fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate economic growth and alleviate deflationary pressures.

In light of weak expectations and a lack of willingness to invest among enterprises, we must increase infrastructure investment. It is crucial to emphasize that we refer to a broad definition of infrastructure, which includes areas like "new infrastructure", healthcare, elderly housing, cultural education facilities, and R&D — investments that typically lack profits and are unlikely to attract private enterprises.

I fully agree with the view that the fundamental reason for current low price levels lies in insufficient demand and supply-demand imbalances, rather than inadequate monetary supply. The main issue is the inadequate total demand. Although some policies aimed at stimulating consumption and the real estate market were introduced in the first half of the year, their effects have not been significant, possibly due to late implementation or insufficient intensity to effectively address current economic challenges. Therefore, the government needs to continue to strengthen expansionary macroeconomic policies, particularly fiscal policies, while ensuring these policies are effectively implemented.

If the expansionary policies prove effective and China successfully achieves the around 5 percent annual growth target this year, we can maintain economic growth above 5 percent by 2025. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of external shocks or policy missteps leading to a sudden rise in inflation before achieving potential growth rates. Thus, we must seize the current opportunity and strive to reach the around 5 percent annual economic growth target.

When it comes to the question of whether capital formation growth in 2024 can exceed that of 2023, it depends on whether infrastructure growth can significantly surpass that of 2023. Infrastructure investment growth is influenced by several factors, including project reserves, local government incentives, and the availability of funds and costs.

In the first half of the year, the government's issuance actions of ultra-long-term

special treasury bonds were relatively slow, possibly due to concerns about the potential crowding-out effects and market volatility from excessive bond issuance, or due to inflation fears.

With further issuance of treasury bonds, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, is expected to intensify open market operations. The central bank should coordinate with the Ministry of Finance to increase bond purchases to mitigate the "crowding-out effect", lower interest rates, and stimulate economic growth.

When it comes to the question of "how to solve China's high savings rate problem", China currently needs to focus on increasing total demand rather than on the high savings rates. Increasing total demand essentially means boosting consumption, investment, and net export demand. Supporting exports is necessary in the current context, but relying on exports for economic growth is not sustainable. Local governments should avoid stimulating exports through measures like tax rebates and instead focus on helping enterprises transform and upgrade while exploring domestic markets. Stimulating consumption is also essential, with localized strategies based on actual conditions. In the medium to long term, the government should work on reforms in the tax system and social security to increase income equality and enhance overall consumption propensity.

For a long time, China's producer price index has registered negative growth. Meanwhile, the growth of China's consumer price index has fluctuated around 2 percent, even experiencing negative growth at times. In this context, it is necessary to implement expansionary fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate economic growth and alleviate deflationary pressures.

While China's savings rate is relatively high, several countries, especially in Asia and Northern Europe, have savings rates comparable to or higher than China's, such as Singapore. As long as high savings are voluntary rather than forced, they are not necessarily a bad thing. The government should focus on transforming savings into investments rather than simply lowering the savings rate.

In the current situation, since consumption is a function of income, income expectations, and wealth, residents will not increase consumption without growth in income, improvement in income expectations, or rising asset prices. Even if the government provides residents with cash, they are likely to save it for emergencies. Therefore, the government should concentrate on using controllable methods, such as infrastructure investment, to kick-start economic growth. Infrastructure investment not only directly creates demand, but also generates a "crowding-in effect", stimulating investment in other sectors and promoting overall economic growth. As the economy grows, residents' incomes will rise, leading to increased consumer spending.

In 2024, the government should aggressively issue treasury bonds to support infrastructure investment, ensuring that we can smoothly achieve around 5 percent economic growth in 2025.

The economic outlook for the second half of 2024 remains challenging, but we still have a time window to realize the annual growth target. Currently, inflation remains at historically low levels, allowing plenty of room for implementing expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. In contrast, the US faces greater economic pressure, balancing inflation, growth, and international payments. China, however, only needs to focus on economic growth.

Overall, I believe that the economic situation in the US has limited impact on China. The key is for us to manage our own affairs well. As 2024 is already more than halfway through, adopting a wait-and-see approach is not advisable. We must adopt a resolute spirit to achieve the around 5 percent annual economic growth target and reverse the declining trend in economic growth that has persisted since 2010.

The writer is a member of the Academic Divisions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Long-term rise of yuan intact despite challenges

MAIN STREET

By Massimiliano Castelli

Despite near-term challenges over growth and geopolitics, the RMB is likely to increase its share in global forex reserves over the long-term.

When the renminbi was included in the special drawing rights basket in 2015, expectations for a rapid rise of the Chinese currency — also known as the yuan — in the global financial architecture were high. In fact, over the following years, the RMB's share within global foreign exchange reserves more than doubled to 2.8 percent in 2021, according to IMF's Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves data.

The widespread assumption at that time was that the RMB would eventually challenge the dominant role of the US dollar. However, the pace of growth of the RMB's share of forex reserves has been hindered by several factors in recent years. According to the IMF, its share fell slightly to around 2.3 percent by the end of 2023.

UBS Asset Management carries out an annual survey of central bankers ahead of its Reserve Management Seminar in June. In its 2024 survey, the RMB's average long-term target allocation among reserve managers stood at 5 percent, a slight drop from 5.2 percent in the 2023 survey. However, looking at the year ahead, central banks are planning to further add to their RMB positions. Overall, 70 percent of survey respondents answered that they had already invested, or were considering investing, in the Chinese currency.

The pause in the march of the RMB to global reserve currency status is due to multiple factors.

First of all, the rise in US interest rates that began in 2022 to fight inflation has moved the interest rate differential in favor of the greenback, leading to reserve managers taking advantage of higher yields in the US Treasury market.

Next, international investor sentiment toward China, including reserve managers, is currently weak due to the country's ongoing economic challenges.

Finally, geopolitical tensions and the risk of sanctions have somewhat dented the appetite of central banks for onshore yuan assets. Following the start of the conflict in Ukraine, the US and its allies targeted reserves held by the central bank of Russia, raising concerns among central banks about sanction risks stemming from forex reserves, and whether they can continue to be perceived as "safe" assets. The increase in direct and indirect sanction risks has undoubtedly impacted demand for the Chinese currency among reserve managers.

What is the outlook for the RMB and can it resume its growth in global reserves?

The US-China interest rate differential is expected to fall going forward as the Fed starts easing interest rates. Should the US economy slow down significantly or even fall into recession, the interest rate differential could disappear. This would make RMB fixed income assets more attractive going forward.

The challenges faced by the Chinese real estate sector are on track to eventually get resolved as the Chinese government continues implementing targeted policy measures. This may also have a positive impact on household consumption and growth.

What about geopolitics? According to the latest UBS RMS survey, when asked which reserve currencies are most likely to benefit from macroeconomic and geopolitical shifts over the next five years, the greenback and the yuan were the two currencies most often mentioned, followed by the yen and the euro. When asked specifically about the impact of US-China tensions on the internationalization of the renminbi, 47 percent of respondents said that it had no impact, 39 percent believed it had slowed it down and 14 percent thought it has accelerated it.

Demand for diversification of reserves away from the US dollar remains strong globally, driven by geopolitical, economic and financial dynamics. So far, this process has been slow as the US economy and its currency have outperformed expectations. We believe the dollar is and will remain for the foreseeable future the main store of value for global investors, including reserve managers. However, currency diversification is set to continue in the future as the world gradually moves toward a multipolar system. The RMB looks set to continue its steady rise in global forex reserves, in particular if it is supported by an improvement in the Chinese economy, the ongoing rise in the use of yuan in cross-border payments and the more widespread use of the digital RMB.

The writer is head of strategy for official institutions, UBS Asset Management. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

Quad summit highlights divide-and-rule strategy has not gained expected traction

US President Joe Biden hosted Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan in Wilmington, Delaware, for the fourth Quad Leaders' Summit on Saturday.

The Biden administration went to great lengths to explain how the Quad has delivered on the priorities of its "Indo-Pacific" partners — ranging from addressing pandemics and disease and investing in critical and emerging technologies to strengthening their maritime domain awareness and maritime security — and how the Quad is meant to be a "global force for good." But that failed to disguise the Quad's role as a geopolitical tool of the US.

Although neither the joint statement of the four leaders nor the fact sheet of their summit issued by the White House mentions China at all, the country was mentioned at least 20 times in the half-hour news conference held by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan after the conclusion of the summit.

Although the US blames the rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific on China, all regional countries, including the other three members of the Quad, are well aware that the main cause is the US taking the initiative to try and implement a divide-and-rule strategy in the region by taking all possible means to sow discord between China and its neighbors.

In the process, Washington has realized that the Quad cannot glue the other three member countries to it nor appeal to other regional countries, as they all have close and comprehensive trade, economic and cultural connections with China. That explains why the Biden administration has taken the latest meeting of the Quad leaders as the opportunity to transform the Quad from just a security mechanism to a comprehensive one to "ensure its endurance for the long term."

The aim is to provide public goods and services to the Asia-Pacific to better counter China's influence. In the near future, the Quad is likely to be docked with the US' "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity". Replacing its dual security-economy model with a more integrated and comprehensive one is a significant change to the Biden administration's China-containment strategy in its last few months.

In so doing, the Biden administration is trying to replace the region's long-term game rules featuring mutual respect, noninterference, equity and win-win cooperation with its "value diplomacy", which can support its discourse of aggression on upholding the "rules-based order" and a "free and open Indo-Pacific".

It is notable that the US is discarding its initial promise of generous funding support under the Quad framework. Now it is asking the other three countries to foot the bill for the US' China-containment strategy, with each Quad government committed to working through their respective budgetary processes "to secure robust funding for Quad priorities".

That represents another big change in the funding rules for the US' China game, with the go-Dutch model of the Quad being transplanted to the IPEF. The change actually did not come as a surprise, as it happened shortly after the Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 50 basis points last week, indicating the Fed's judgment that the US' economy is showing signs of recession under its exorbitant national debt pressure.

When Biden hosted a NATO summit in Washington in July, it was aimed at demonstrating his leadership capabilities ahead of his reelection campaign. Having been forced to withdraw as presidential election candidate afterwards, as that summit only served to raise more doubts about his competence, the US president has sought to use the Quad summit to carry out some remedial measures to sustain his signature alliance-leveraged China-containment strategy as a hallmark diplomatic achievement of his time in office.

Yet the summit has failed to cover up the embarrassing truth that it is not China that has been isolated but the US under his administration.

Israel caught in self-made vicious cycle

The resumption of cross-border attacks between Israel and Hezbollah after pager and walkie-talkie explosions that have already killed at least 37 and injured more than 3,000 people in Lebanon may trigger a war between the two sides. This may be what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is gambling on in order to prolong his stay in power.

Cross-border fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has resulted in the evacuation of about 6,000 Israeli residents from the northern part of Israel. When they will be able to return to their homes remains a question, although the Israeli government has set their returning to their homes one of the objectives of its military action.

But the pager explosions and the air strikes that followed against Hezbollah have only escalated tensions in the border areas with Lebanon, which has made it even more unlikely the displaced residents will be able to return to their homes anytime soon.

What Israel has done in Gaza and its repeated attacks on Hezbollah targets as well as its military actions in the West Bank have created a vicious cycle. The more actions it takes, the deeper Israel becomes mired in conflict with various military organizations around itself. The irony is the more intent the Netanyahu government is on military action, the more it is undermining the security of Israel.

Israel could have made concessions in talks with Hamas that would have realized a cease-fire and helped promote the negotiated return of the hostages held by Hamas, but it did not. Netanyahu's insistence on continuing Israel's military action has only resulted in the prolonged conflicts both in Gaza and Lebanon.

Israel's military carried out raids and air strikes in multiple parts of the occupied West Bank in late August, which means military conflicts between Israel and Hamas as well as other Palestinian organizations will continue. Netanyahu is trying to prolong his own political life at the expense of not only tens of thousands of innocent lives, but also at the cost of regional peace as well as the future of Israel.

It is not difficult to conclude that an end to the current conflict could easily result in the Israeli prime minister being swept away from office — especially once investigations are concluded into how Israel ignored evidence of the Oct 7 attack by Hamas in 2023 that killed about 1,200 Israelis, and how slowly Israel's defense forces responded.

And while Israel had the sympathy of the international community on its side after Hamas' attack on Oct 7, it has now lost the support of most countries because of its brutal persecution of the Palestinians and its reckless broadening of its war aims.

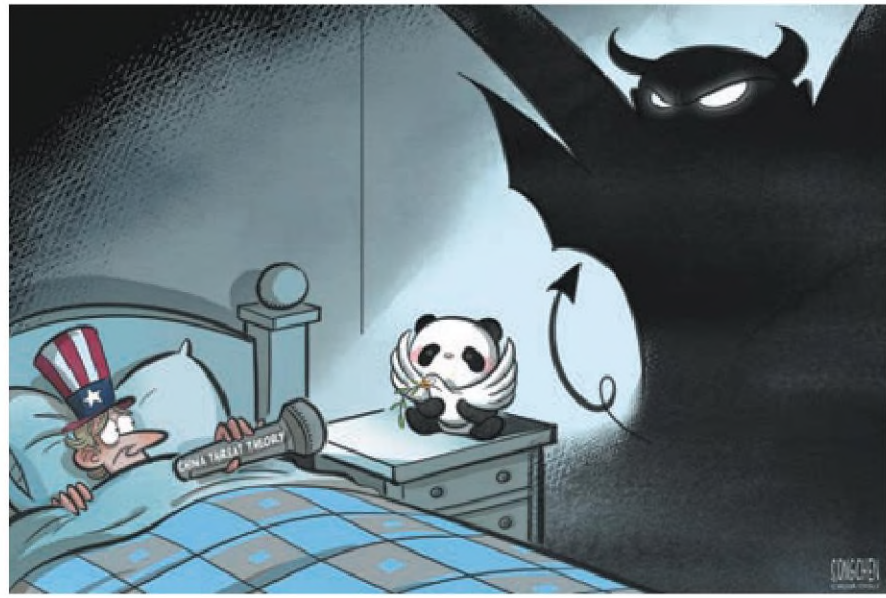
The Netanyahu government has turned a blind eye to the fact that tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives in Gaza as a result of the military action it has launched and many more are struggling to survive amid the worsening humanitarian situation in the Palestinian enclave.

The pager explosions in Lebanon last week have reinforced the image of the Netanyahu government being beyond all restraint. Yet in terms of military resources, Israel has been overstretching itself and it is reliant on the support of the United States.

The only way to stop the vicious cycle of violence Netanyahu is so single-mindedly fixated on is for the US to unequivocally and unconditionally stop speculating on his monomania by enabling it.

The International Court of Justice has made it clear that Israel's actions violate international law. It is therefore not an option but a legal obligation for Israel to cease those actions and for the US to stop being complicit in them.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Balanced growth of global economy high on working group's agenda

The China-US Economic Working Group held its fifth meeting in Beijing last week. The regular and frequent exchanges between the economic departments of the two countries have sent positive signals that the two sides seek to stabilize their economic relations.

In particular, the two sides discussed the issue of imbalanced growth of the global economy. The United States has long made false accusations against China on that. The global economic imbalance originates from some countries' inability to balance the inflow and outflow of funds. Take the US economy as an example. The US is a consumer country with relatively little production, which leads to an imbalance in its capital flows. At the same time, as the US dollar is a global currency, the US needs to export dollars through trade or bonds to supply global transactions, which has complex impacts on the flow of funds in the

country. In general, the global economic imbalance is caused by low savings and insufficient production in the US, and its high debt to support high spending. This is the US' own problem, but it is trying to pass the buck to China by hyping up issues such as China's so-called economic imbalance and overcapacity. China does not accept these irresponsible and false accusations.

The various tariff barriers established by the US against China cause a sharp rise in consumer prices in the US, and are likely to form a chain reaction around the world. The tariffs are also likely to boost a rebound of the inflation in the US.

The Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 50 basis points last week, indicating its judgment that the US economy is already at risk of recession, which will produce marked spillover effects in the world.

In addition to these topics, the two sides discussed the debt problem of some

developing countries. In terms of debt relief, China has actively participated in the discussions in the G20, and has taken many practical actions in that regard. As the largest contributor to the G20 debt relief initiative, China accounts for more than 40 percent of the total global debt relief under the G20 framework.

In contrast, the largest creditors of many African countries are US lenders. Their already-high interest rates were further raised after the Fed's interest rate hike, plunging many less-developed economies deeper into a US-made debt trap. The Fed's interest rate cut also adds to the risks and uncertainties to their economy with the inflow of speculative funds in a short time. The US needs to do more to ease the debt problem of developing countries to help them smoothly weather fluctuations and risks.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

Regulators put brakes on fast and furious e-bikes

Relevant central departments started soliciting public opinions on the newly revised "Electric Bicycle Safety Technical Specifications" last week. The draft national standard for e-bikes aims to prevent e-bike modifications that often involve increasing the rated power and maximum speed.

While the speed of some modified e-bikes can reach 160 kilometers per hour, the draft standard clarifies that the maximum design speed should not exceed 25 km/h. Apart from traffic accidents caused by speeding e-bikers — which account for about 70 percent of traffic accidents in some places — about 25,000 fires a year

nationwide are attributable to the charging of problematic e-bike batteries. The new standard makes the use of flame retardant in e-bike's nonmetallic materials compulsory, and also limits the proportion of plastic parts that can be used in e-bikes.

There are also some amendments responding to consumer demands. For example, the weight limit of e-bikes using lead-acid batteries will be raised from 55 kilograms to 63 kg, and pedal riding devices will no longer be mandatory.

There are about 350 million e-bikes on Chinese roads now. The introduction of the new standard is expected to become

an important opportunity for the upgrading of China's e-bike industry.

The manufacturers, retailers and market and industry supervisory departments need to strengthen their coordination and fulfill their respective duties to ensure strict implementation of the new standard once it is introduced.

Notably the authorities will give a six-month transition period for the manufacturers to produce new e-bikes according to the new standard, and an additional three months for the e-bike dealers to digest their inventory of old e-bikes.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Peaceful and prosperous future is within reach

Editor's Note: Foreign Minister Wang Yi is attending the United Nations Summit of the Future and the general debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly from Sunday to the following Saturday. The Foreign Ministry released the Position Paper of the People's Republic of China for the Summit of the Future and the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly last week. The following are excerpts of the paper:

The goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity; the pathway is promoting global governance that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit; the guiding principle is to apply the common values of humanity; the basic underpinning lies in building a new type of international relations; the strategic guidance comes from the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative; and the platform for action is high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

On this basis, China will work with countries of the world to meet challenges, achieve prosperity for all and facilitate the move toward a brighter future of peace, security, prosperity

and progress in the world. With the future in mind, China is committed to being a staunch force for the safeguarding of world peace and stability. The country firmly chooses peace over war, and will work with all countries to implement the GSI following the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

China is committed to providing impetus for common development, and pursues a mutually beneficial strategy of opening-up. It strives to create new opportunities for the world with its own development and to play its part in building an open global economy that delivers greater benefits to all peoples.

China is committed to advancing interactions among civilizations for their greater progress. It advocates that all countries champion humanity's common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom, jointly implement the GCI, respect the diversity of civilizations, value the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutu-

al learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority for the further progress of civilizations.

China is committed to playing a constructive role in the development and reform of global governance. It advocates an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. It believes in equality between countries big or small, and opposes hegemonism and power politics.

China is committed to harnessing the power of science, technology and innovation for the benefit of all humanity. The progress and development of science and technology should enrich the denotations and connotations of the concept of international peace and security.

China stands ready to work with all countries to deliver on the GDI, the GSI and the GCI together, and realize an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization to usher in a brighter tomorrow in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

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COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China

Editor's note: This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. After achieving the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, China began a new journey toward realizing the goal of building a modern socialist country in all respects. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Li Feng

Consultations facilitate good governance

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Over the past decades, the CPPCC has played a significant role in promoting sound decision-making in China, bringing together wisdom from various sectors, both within and outside the Communist Party of China.

Consultative democracy is a form, and the strength of, socialist democracy, and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference is a special consultative body and an important channel for promoting socialist consultative democracy, which in turn promotes whole-process people's democracy.

In its resolution on "Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization", the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China vowed to advance whole-process people's democracy and introduce measures to improve the mechanisms for consultative democracy.

First, consultative democracy plays a significant role in public policy formulation and implementation. Theoretically, making consultation a part of the public policymaking process will increase administrative costs. But mistakes and repetitive efforts can be avoided, and making scientific decisions will become easier if all stakeholders' opinions and needs are taken into consideration in the beginning.

A practical, socialist consultative democracy can facilitate innovative decision-making. Consultative democracy follows the principle of conducting consultations before and during policymaking. Consultations help policymakers to better understand the needs and opinions of different groups of people, reduce social conflicts and build social consensus. Consultations can also help policymakers reach the greatest common ground based on the wishes and needs of the people, modernizing the national governance system and governance capacity in the process.

Socialist consultative democracy stresses that since citizens are affected by public policies, they have the right to participate in the decision-making process. Their participation in the process allows groups with different interests to voice their opinions and give their suggestions, so as to help



MA XUEJING/CHINA DAILY

the policymakers make better informed and balanced decisions.

Second, socialist consultative democracy with Chinese characteristics in the new era pursues self-improvement to build a virtuous circle of a sound system design, technological innovation and effective governance, and integrate the whole-process democratic mechanism and high-efficiency governance tools.

For example, socialist consultative democracy can meet the needs of cyber-politics and introduce



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new technologies in public works. The Party and the government adhere to a people-centric philosophy, put people first, and introduce innovative technologies such as online governance service platforms, "internet-e-government" and online surveys to promote consultative democracy in the realm of cyberspace.

Third, socialist consultative democracy reflects the feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency of whole-process people's democracy, and can help solve many real-life problems, and

more effectively and efficiently transmit and collect information.

In fact, socialist consultative democracy is a manifestation of whole-process people's democracy. It facilitates consultations among political parties, different levels of people's congresses, government departments, and different committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and social organizations. China practices whole-process people's democracy through a combination of elections, consultations, decision-making, management and oversight, that is, it covers all aspects of democracy and sectors of society. And that is precisely why it is people-centric and effective.

This institutionalized arrangement of socialist consultative democracy ensures orderly consultations while making the consultation results public. Consultative democracy has a unique advantage and function in the development of whole-process people's democracy, not least because it upholds the Party leadership, ensures law-based governance, and follows socialism with Chinese characteristics.

This form of democracy can help meet the people's need to lead a better life, by pursuing common prosperity, promoting high-quality economic development, and helping build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful.

Therefore, more efforts should be made to strengthen the Party's leadership in the consultation process, because the Party's leadership is the most essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics and a guarantee for the development of socialist consultative democracy. So it is essential to improve the mechanism of consultative democracy and facilitate consultations among political parties, and people's congresses and the CPPCC at different levels, and ensure the consultations are more efficient and result-oriented, as well as introduce rules and policies to provide an institutional guarantee for the development of socialist consultative democracy.

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Jiao Yang

An exemplary journey in eradicating poverty, realizing economic goals

Over the past four decades, China has lifted more than 800 million people out of extreme poverty, thus accounting for about 75 percent of global poverty reduction between 1981 and 2020.

In 2021, China declared "complete victory" in the fight against absolute poverty based on its national standards, achieving the poverty reduction goal set by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a full decade before the deadline. The speed and scale of China's poverty reduction are unparalleled in world history.

China's success in alleviating absolute poverty is driven by the country's comprehensive economic reform and tailored poverty eradication work.

Since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, China has experienced several decades of rapid economic growth. The benefits of reform and opening-up have been intrinsically linked to poverty reduction. In fact, there is a high correlation between GDP growth and the eradication of absolute poverty.

First, agricultural development played a crucial role in China's poverty reduction work in the early stages, given that poverty in the country was mainly concentrated in rural areas. China's economic reforms significantly improved agricultural labor productivity, facilitated the transition of labor from agriculture to higher productivity manufacturing and service sectors, and raised total factor productivity. Apart from raising the incomes of farmers, improvements in productivity have also facilitated the release of surplus labor to other sectors and urban areas, thus diversifying income sources for households.

Second, urbanization, too, benefited poverty reduction work in multiple ways. China's rapid economic growth has been accompanied by substantial urbanization. The urban population in China increased from 190 million in 1980 to 933 million in 2023, while the urbanization rate increased from 19.4 percent to 66.2 percent during the same period. Urbanization directly contributed to poverty reduction by providing higher-paying jobs for migrant workers and lifting their standards of living.

Additionally, urbanization indirectly alleviated poverty in rural areas by providing better-paying jobs for migrant workers and thus enabling them to send remittances to their parents in the countryside, and by offering a bigger market for farmers' produce.

And third, the process of industrialization has benefited poverty reduction work. China's rapid industrialization has not only created employment opportunities for the rural population but also has benefited from the supply of low-cost labor from rural areas. From 1992 to 2023, the proportion of secondary industry's contribution to GDP increased from 22 percent to 38 percent, accompanied by significant improvements in total factor productivity.

The Chinese government introduced four major poverty reduction plans in 1986, 1994, 2001 and 2011. In the mid-1980s, the government proposed the policy of letting some areas and people get rich first. Subsequently, the State Council, China's Cabinet, established the Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development to identify 331 impoverished counties based on per capita income at the county level. Key support for the move was provided by the allocation of development funds, subsidized loans and relief programs.

The Priority Poverty Alleviation Program (1994-2000) was aimed at addressing the food and clothing needs of 80 million impoverished people within seven years. It revised the criteria for classifying impoverished counties, increasing the number of designated impoverished counties to 592.

The Outline of Development-driven Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas (2001-2010) focused on areas with high impoverished populations, including regions with large ethnic minority populations, old revolutionary base areas, border areas, and severely impoverished regions in central and western China.

And the 2011-2020 outline sharpened its focus on Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Program by identifying some counties and 14 contiguous impoverished areas. Targeted poverty alleviation efforts continued after 2013, emphasizing the need to precisely identify and provide effective assistance to impoverished people through scientific and rational means.

A combination of different measures, including relief-type poverty alleviation program, development-oriented policies, social security system reform and targeted interventions has proven effective in China's battle against poverty.

Moreover, the Chinese authorities have acknowledged that poverty alleviation is much more than about simply raising the incomes of impoverished people. Substantial investments in infrastructure and healthcare, as well as the expansion of social services have not only yielded direct benefits but also produced significant positive externalities, thereby contributing to the improvement of overall living standards.

Eradicating poverty in a country as large as China, which has significant regional and demographic disparities, is a monumental task. China's achievement in eradicating poverty is an example of its people-centric development philosophy, and its experience offers valuable insights for other developing countries.

While eradicating poverty has paved the way for China's modernization, it is not the country's final goal. China has a new objective of making substantial progress toward common prosperity by 2035. Therefore, in the face of global economic fragmentation and significant domestic economic challenges, the Chinese authorities must continue to implement dynamically adjusted, targeted poverty alleviation policies and remain vigilant against the risk of people slipping back into poverty.

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Hussein Askary

China's ship sails steadily toward its destination

"China can only do well when the world is doing well. When China does well, the world will get even better," President Xi Jinping said in his keynote speech at the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2023.

The 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China conjures the image of a gigantic ship with 1.4 billion passengers sailing in stormy weather at times and calm waters at others, with the captain steadfastly keeping the compass needle in the direction of the destination.

The destination, in this case, is the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. While the ship will continue its journey from there on to new and more fascinating destinations, its journey till now is already a remarkable achievement with no precedent in history. It is fascinating for me as someone living in a small country like Sweden with less than 11 million people to think how a country as large as China with a massive population could move steadily in one direction.

The outcome of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China showed how the country's leadership has managed, especially since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, to maneuver the ship of the State from one destination to another, while overcoming challenges and

making remarkable achievements on the way to building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Along the way, many internal problems including air, water and soil pollution, and unbalanced urban and rural development have emerged. On the international front, major crises like the global financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the global inflation crisis have been severe headwinds that the ship has had to endure. But it never veered from its course.

Equally amazing is the fact that China has risen to such global prominence economically and politically without waging wars on its neighbors or even those who consider the country a threat and a rival. In contrast, China's rise has contributed to global stability.

In the past centuries, modernization and industrialization in Europe, and the West generally, but even in Japan, although great and beneficial to humankind in many ways, have been associated with colonization, imperialism, destructive wars and the rule of the jungle. China is a great exception, because it has not used any of the dubious means of the West to achieve its unprecedented development.

The world today is in dire need of a peaceful mechanism for not only



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resolving crises but also to ensure countries coexist peacefully. And China's success in diplomatically bridging the gap between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023 is a shining example of such a potential. Its success in bringing 14 different Palestinian factions together on a unified policy and calling for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing tragedy in the Gaza Strip in accordance with international law is another example.

The world benefits from the Chinese philosophy of harmonizing and creating a holistic structure within which a multitude of diverse issues can be resolved. Chinese leaders reiterated recently that the country must pursue an independent and peaceful foreign policy, help build a community with a shared future for mankind, respect human values, and promote the Belt and Road Initiative along with the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

The world, especially the major Western powers, has tried to resolve most of the strategic challenges and threats using security and military means. Not only has method failed to resolve any of the issues but also it made things even worse, leading to the loss of more lives and resources.

The US-led NATO's 20-year occupation of Afghanistan is a stark reminder of the futility of this approach. Neglecting socioeconomic development is a fatal error, which China has been warning against, and leading by example to show that security issues are entangled with economic, social and even cultural development.

Economic cooperation and cultural exchanges, including people-to-people exchanges, must become the beacon guiding countries toward security and peace as they sail in stormy waters. The recently concluded Summit of the China-Africa Forum on Cooperation was a reminder of the effectiveness of Chinese diplomacy through economic cooperation. The FOCAC Summit also showed what is meant by a community with a shared future. Many mistake it for mere rhetoric, but in reality it is a notion of common prosperity and common good.

China is acutely aware that its current and future prosperity depends on the prosperity of other countries, including African countries, but equally importantly on global peace and stability. China has advanced rapidly in recent decades, but to continue moving forward, it needs to be joined by the rest of the world. It was in this sense that President Xi recently invoked an African proverb: If you want to go fast, walk alone, if you want to go far, walk together.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



ALFREDO GARCIA JIMENEZ

Driver of positive change

As global economic center of gravity is shifting and the US is losing hegemony, China's re-emergence as a global power is tied to its participation in various international institutions

Since the end of the Cold War, China has sought to play an increasingly important role in global economic policy. This role is a subject of interest within the framework of global dialogue.

The most important feature of the current and foreseeable international geopolitical system is the geostrategic competition among great powers. According to the Military Balance of 2022, China's defense spending in 2022 accounted for 1.6 percent of its GDP and the US' defense spending was 3.45 percent of its GDP.

In other words, the US spent three times more on defense than China. On the other hand, in terms of GDP, the US reached \$25.44 trillion, while China's GDP was \$17.96 trillion in 2022, according to the International Monetary Fund. This means that China's GDP represents 70.5 percent of that of the US. The US ranks first while China is second globally in terms of GDP size.

Throughout history, there are few examples of what is currently happening in global geopolitics: the US, which has been the undisputed leader of the international power system for over 70 years, designing a world order to its advantage, is unilaterally relinquishing its global leadership without being deprived of its accumulated power by any other actor.

What history teaches us in such cases is that when a great power vacates geopolitical spaces of various kinds, these power vacuums are filled by rivals, who impose different values, criteria or geopolitical rules, establishing new regional or international power relations that are different and even contrary to the previous ones.

For instance, the US has refused to approve reforms to the IMF and the World Bank for more than nine years; it does not support peace negotiations in the Russia-Ukraine conflict; it withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership; it opposes economic globalization; it supports Israel in its genocide against the Palestinian people, and vetoes any United Nations resolution to achieve peace in the region; it questions NATO's collective defense principle; and it withdrew from the

2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

China's rise and its economic dynamism are first linked to achieving significant levels of autonomy, political-strategic strength and basic well-being in health and education as a result of the 1949 revolution. Then, with the reforms and opening-up starting in 1978, China attracted capital from its diaspora, absorbed the lower levels of Japanese outsourcing, developed significant communal and State economic frameworks, and later, absorbed large volumes of Western capital under its conditions, ultimately becoming the world's major industrial platform.

China and the Asia-Pacific region's growing role in the global sphere indicate a critical change in the world power map, with implications for Latin America and the Caribbean. This change reflects the crisis of a historical cycle of hegemony led by the US since World War II. Global order crises create new tactical and strategic margins for the emergence of processes of insubordination in the periphery, whose peoples seek to break, modify, or weaken dependency relations and undertake more autonomous development projects. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the underlying trends in China's rise, the Asia-Pacific region, and their impact on the current global and regional order.

Another central dimension to situate the proposed topic in the Latin American and Caribbean context is geopolitics. Despite not seeking conflict with the US, China has counterbalanced US power, taking advantage of strategic gaps and mistakes in its relations with the region. In strengthening China-LAC relations, it is worth mentioning the importance and support given to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. This was evident in the CELAC meeting in Chile in 2018, where the region renewed its commitment to the strategic initiative of the "New Silk Road" or Belt and Road Initiative, positioning China as a connector of the region through a global megaproject. Additionally, Beijing has promoted trade agreements with several LAC countries and groups. China's leadership role in the BRICS has opened new economic-financial relationship spaces for the region and supported new areas of cooperation.

Regarding financial matters, a key figure showing China's influence in the region is that its public banks have loaned more resources to LAC countries than the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank in this decade. Furthermore, as part of its strategy to internationalize the yuan and expand financial influence, China has signed currency swap agreements with Argentina and Brazil and established the first financial hub for the internationalization of the renminbi in Santiago, Chile.

China's economic projection not only challenges the US hegemony, now entering its terminal phase, but also questions Western imperialism and potentially threatens the very dominance of capitalism. At the same time, other factors are reconfiguring the new global economic order. These include hegemonic crisis and transition, as well as new actors and regions on the global stage.

We are witnessing a process of structural change or economic transition, marked by a shift in the global economic center of gravity from central powers to "emerging" economies, a technological transition to robotics, information and communications technology, artificial intelligence, and new materials, a political rise of Global South countries, a geopolitical shift from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and a cultural or civilizational transition seeded in the crisis of the modern Western values and ideas.

All of this manifests in the relative loss of US hegemony, the decline of developed countries' monopoly on advanced high-end production and high-value-added services, economic competition between China and the US, and the rise of new global actors. China's re-emergence as a global power is tied to its interest in, acceptance of, and participation in various international institutions. From this perspective, China can be considered a driver of positive change within the international system.

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ALBERTO LOMBARDO

Crisis control

Developed economies are implementing protectionist policies that will not alleviate their woes

The Western economic system is in the grip of an irreversible crisis. Even the most advanced and technological European production sectors are not exempt from the crisis. An example is the energy transition policy promoted by the European Union, which is



being undertaken with erroneous strategic planning. The EU's experience with solar panels should have set off alarm bells. At that time, production was undertaken without having a solid production chain. Instead, Chinese production quickly managed to beat the competition, thanks to economies of scale, technological innovation, and products differentiated by performance range and cost. China now dominates the photovoltaic panel production sector in every link of the supply chain, a result achieved with an expenditure more than 10 times that of the member states of the EU.

According to the International Energy Agency, China has created more than 300,000 jobs along the solar photovoltaics value chain since 2011. China's industrial policies have enabled economies of scale and supported continuous innovation throughout the supply chain. Costs in China are 20 percent lower than in the United States and 35 percent lower than in Europe. In addition, Chinese investments in Malaysia and Vietnam have also made these countries major exporters of photovoltaic products.

Now the EU is making the same mistake with electric vehicles. The EU is implementing a plan to take millions of traditional vehicles off the market and then out of circulation. Major European manufacturers are already preparing for the big leap. Research centers are creating models to demonstrate that the transition will be a great opportunity for all of Europe, which will finally emerge from the decade-long crisis in the car industry, or rather its enormous production overcapacity. To kickstart a still dubious market, economic incentives are being proposed that can broaden the production base and rapidly reduce costs.

Of course, forgetting all the external context, this replacement cannot lead to anything good. The capacity of the national electricity grid, the supply capacity of raw materials and the disposal capaci-

Sanctions would also hit European manufacturers. The same goes for the US, which has been imposing duties to dramatically increase the costs of imports from China, on which US production and consumption are heavily dependent. The so-called decoupling, that is, the detachment from the Chinese economy, is completely unthinkable for the West, while China has diversified its markets.

ty of exhausted products should be evaluated first. Then the real sustainability for the citizens to face the cost of a car that is within their means should be evaluated, especially in a time of economic crisis. All these steps have been eluded in front of the mirage of billion-dollar investments and stratospheric profit returns.

For an electric car, 40 percent of the total cost is represented by the battery and another 40 percent by the software. China first created the value chain. In the past years, Chinese entrepreneurs, having acquired mining concessions in nickel, cobalt and lithium producing countries, have innovated their technology to build new generation batteries by acquiring the know-how. Furthermore, China is currently at the forefront in the world in the production of future sodium batteries, less expensive and less polluting than lithium ones. The Chinese car manufacturer BYD has surpassed Tesla in terms of global market share and is the leading auto manufacturer in Europe, overall, for cars sold. Finally, China is also at the forefront in the last piece of the value chain: recycling. Here, Western lies have no room to slander China. Of the world's battery recycling capacity, about 200,000 tons in 2021, roughly half was carried out in China.

The report of the Kiel Institute states that government subsidies received were often used strategi-

cally to advance key technologies for market readiness. The report also highlights the combination with other support measures, such as preferential access to essential raw materials, technology transfer by foreign investors and treatment in public procurement and administrative procedures.

That is, the Chinese public sector is accused of doing its job well, of making the "invisible hand" act to support and prosper the market, which then acts according to its own rules. In other words, China is accused of playing by the rules of the market better than those who invented them. And so when the team that introduced the rules no longer finds it convenient to play by the rules that it has imposed, it denounces them and appeals to supposed fair play to change them in its favor. Western monopolists demonize free markets and competition.

The Western response is disheartening. They only succeed in slandering China for violating the rules of the free market with public support, which in truth no one prevents our countries from implementing, and indeed which they implement when it comes to saving banks from the effects of shady dealings in which they are involved. If there is no global planning and the only goal of research centers is to draw up plans that please the client, the result is that they believe their own side of the story, mistaking it for reality.

Photovoltaics and electric vehicles are just two examples of how Chinese industry is able to overwhelm Western industry in many sectors. Closing oneself off from this reality means worsening the situation. Trying to block China's rise, hiding behind protectionist barriers, after having made them fall all over the world, is a futile and damaging exercise mainly for those who implement it. Sanctions would also hit European manufacturers. The same goes for the US, which has been imposing duties to dramatically increase the costs of imports from China, on which US production and consumption are heavily dependent. The so-called decoupling, that is, the detachment from the Chinese economy, is completely unthinkable for the West, while China has diversified its markets.

The author is general secretary of the Communist Party (Italy). 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.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE



Kunqu Opera actor Yu Jiulin and actress Shen Fengying, who play hero Liu Mengmei and heroine Du Liniang in the youth version of *The Peony Pavilion*, at Peking University on Sept 16, with performers of the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theater of Jiangsu. **Below:** Chinese-American writer Pai Hsien-yung and the performers greet the audience after the show. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

In Peking University Hall on Sept 13, an air of reflective nostalgia and vibrant enthusiasm enveloped a lecture by Pai Hsien-yung, a distinguished Chinese-American writer, playwright and director.

Pai, 87, a pivotal figure in modern Chinese literature and theater, took the stage to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the youth edition of the Kunqu Opera, *The Peony Pavilion*, which he produced and adapted. This adaptation of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) classic, originally penned by Tang Xianzu, has been instrumental in bridging the gap between Kunqu Opera and contemporary youth culture. The lecture not only commemorated two decades of artistic endeavor but also highlighted the enduring relevance of this timeless tale.

Pai's lecture also opened the latest performances of the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*, which was staged for three days at Peking University from Sept 14 to 16. About 6,000 tickets were sold.

"Time flies. It's been 20 years since we premiered the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*. I am back here today, sharing this production with young people, just like what we did two decades ago," Pai says. "I am a writer and I never expected that my life would be associated with Kunqu Opera closely for such a long time. I consider myself a volunteer in protecting and promoting the ancient art form, which is so sophisticated and beautiful that it would be a great regret if we didn't keep it alive and let it be appreciated by a wider audience."

One of the oldest traditional opera forms still performed in China, Kunqu Opera was born in the region of Kunshan in today's Suzhou, Jiangsu province. It has distinguished itself by the virtuosity of its rhythmic patterns and exerted a dominant influence on other recent forms of opera in China, such as Peking Opera, which is over 200 years old. It is hence known as the mother of all Chinese operas.

Combining songs performed in the Suzhou dialect, graceful body movements, martial arts and dance, Kunqu Opera uses a great variety of gestures to express specific emotions.

For Pai, there is a reason why Kunshan was the birthplace of Kunqu Opera. "It's just like Western opera was born in Italy because the Italian language is rhythmic. Kunqu Opera was born in Kunshan because of the local dialect's musicality and expressiveness," he says.

In 2008, UNESCO inscribed Kunqu Opera on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (originally proclaimed in 2001). This recognition put Kunqu Opera in the international spotlight at the same time as it began to experience a domestic revival. The youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion* was the fruit of a collaboration between the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theater of Jiangsu and Pai. Premiering in Taipei in 2004 and staged at Peking University in 2005, the production has been considered a major contributor to the development and revival of the art form.

With more than 500 performances across the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as in countries such as Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States, it has been watched by a combined worldwide audience of about 800,000. The shows were also staged at more than 40 Chinese universities at that time, which allowed Kunqu Opera to witness a surge in popularity, especially among young people.

In 2006, 2009 and 2016, the production returned to Peking University with shows and workshops. In 2009, appealing to the rising number of Kunqu Opera lovers, Pai, along with the university, initiated and launched a project, Inheritance Program of Kunqu Opera, to train young amateur fans. The school also launched an elective course on the art form, which, according to Peng Feng, dean of the university's School of Arts, is one of its most popular courses among students.

Born in Guilin, South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Pai moved to Shanghai with his family during wartime and later settled in Taiwan. He recalls that his enthusiasm for the art form started at the age of 9 when he watched a performance by Peking Opera masters Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) and Yu Zhenfei (1902-93) in Shanghai in 1946.

"I can still remember that performance, an excerpt, *The Interrupted Dream*, from *The Peony Pavilion*, that is still widely performed today. Because of the two Peking Opera artists' fame, tickets sold out fast and the audience was excited," Pai says.

Kunqu Opera is a hard act to follow

Art form steeped in tradition and culture enjoys a growing appeal, **Chen Nan** reports.

"People had been looking forward to Mei's return and the show was phenomenal," Pai adds. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Mei, who specialized in *nandan* (man performing female roles), stopped performing for eight years, refusing to entertain the invaders and growing a moustache to show his determination. *Nandan* roles are a practice forged in feudal times when women were forbidden to take the stage.

Pai as a child didn't understand what Kunqu Opera was all about; he was only impressed by the art form's beauty and the warm feedback of the audience. Gaining his degree in English literature from a local university and his master's degree in literary theory and creative writing at the University of Iowa, Pai became a professor of Chinese literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and lived there for over three decades until his retirement in 1994. His many works include *Taipei People* and *New Yorkers*.

It was in 2002, when Pai was invited to give a lecture on Kunqu Opera in Hong Kong, that he was inspired to produce the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*. Kunqu Opera faced a great challenge back then from modern life, and few people went to theaters to watch the old art form. "I wanted to let young people enjoy the beauty of Kunqu Opera. I wanted to build up a profound dialogue between the past and the present," Pai says.

For his lecture in Hong Kong, Pai not only narrated the history and cultural significance of Kunqu Opera but also had young performers display the singing and movements of *The Peony Pavilion*, an innovation that was widely praised by the students.

The original play, known for its intricate portrayal of love and longing, was a cornerstone of Chinese literature and drama. A beautiful young woman named Du Liniang falls in love with Liu Mengmei, a handsome scholar she meets in her dream. She wakes up and finds that her longing for the man is so strong that it gradually causes her to fall ill and die. After her death, she persuades the judge of the underworld to grant her permission to return as a ghost to find him. She eventually finds Liu, who is temporarily staying at her family temple where she is buried. Their powerful love brings Du back to life, and they live happily ever after.

"*The Peony Pavilion* is just like William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which is timeless and embraced by different cultures. The difference is that Chinese people love a happy ending, so the couple conquered death and reunited," Pai says.

His version was specifically tailored to resonate with a younger audience, infusing the classic narrative with elements that appeal to modern sensibilities while preserving its historical essence. He invited Kunqu Opera actor Yu Jiulin and actress Shen Fengying to play the roles of Liu and Du, both in their 20s in 2004, similar in age as the targeted audiences.

The original version tells the story in 55 acts, spanning eight hours in total. To appeal to the contemporary audience, Pai narrowed it down to 27 acts.

Pai talked about the personal stories he encountered from audience members over the years, especially the exciting moments when the production toured four universities in the US in 2006. "We toured the US for a month. I was worried about the response of the audiences, whether they would be able to enjoy the old Chinese art form. To my surprise, our tickets sold out and our performances received long standing ovations," Pai says.

"For many, both the Chinese and Western audiences, the play was a gateway to discovering the complexities and beauty of Kunqu Opera, while for others, especially our creative team members and our then young performers, it was a profound reminder of the timeless nature of the story and the everlasting appeal of Kunqu Opera."

According to Weng Guosheng, one of the directors of the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*, Pai's adaptation took bold steps to modernize the presentation of the play, incorporating innovative staging techniques, contemporary music elements, and a focus on themes that speak directly to today's youth. "Pai's approach was both respectful and revolutionary, maintaining the soul of the original, while introducing new dimensions to enhance its appeal to younger generations," Weng says.

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What's on

Shimmers of bronze

Around 19th century BC, China entered an age in which bronze ware played a significant role in the material and spiritual lives of society. This era lasted for about 15 centuries. It witnessed a variety of elaborately patterned bronze vessels and apparatuses being produced, of which the shapes, inscriptions and pictorial motifs embodied the clues of the early stages of Chinese civilization.

Home to a collection of such fine, well-preserved bronzes, the Nation-

al Museum of China is touring Macao with selected samples, titled *The Splendor of Chinese Bronzes*, through November at the Macao Museum of Art.

The objects on show, used for ceremonial purposes, banquets and wars, display beautiful silhouettes, the imaginative power behind vibrant decorative patterns and well-developed smelting and sculpting techniques of the time. It shows how these elements related to the political and social systems.



10 am-7 pm, closed on Mondays.
Avenue Xian Xing Hai, Macao Special Administration Region. 853-8791-9814.

Xinjiang pottery

The formation of trade routes along the ancient Silk Road motivated cultural exchanges in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which once provided well-navigated paths for traders from the East and the West. The booming communication at the crossroads of different

cultures inspired pottery production in the region, a tradition passed down to this day.

The Chinese Traditional Culture Museum is looking back at the evolution of pottery making in Xinjiang with an exhibition that gathers images, videos and potteries made by inheritors of the technique. The simple silhouettes of the objects and primitive beauty of the patterns depicting flowers, plants, and animals together reenact the booming scenarios of the Silk Road centuries back.



The exhibition runs until Nov 24.
9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 16 Hujing East Road, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-8799-4766/1866.

CHINA DAILY

LIFE



Left: A scene from the Chinese ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* by the National Ballet of China. Right: Principal ballerina Qiu Yunting plays the lead role of Wu Qionghua. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A new generation's take on an old classic

Red Detachment still entralls audiences and wins fans 60 years after it was first performed, **Chen Nan** reports.

The air vibrates with the rhythmic sound of ballet shoes on the floor, as the young dancers focus intently on their breathing and movements. Here, in the rehearsal room at the National Ballet of China, they are busy with intense preparations for *The Red Detachment of Women*, which celebrates the 60th anniversary of its premiere with 10 performances that end on Thursday.

Since its premiere on Sept 26, 1964, China's first ballet has transcended the realm of dance to become a cultural icon, and a powerful symbol of the country's artistic evolution. Over the past 60 years, the ballet has not only told its poignant story, but also inspired audiences with its representations of perseverance and national pride.

It is known in the US as the ballet performed for former president Richard Nixon during his visit to China in 1972.

This anniversary season, the production is touring nationwide, with 60 shows planned by the end of this year. In Beijing, the National Ballet of China put on a star-studded show with the likes of principal dancers Qiu Yunting and Ma Xiaodong and for the first time, students from the company's ballet school will also participate as a showcase of the troupe's collective strength and new generation of talent.

Additionally, esteemed ballet dancers, who have played leading roles in the classic production, such as Wang Caijun, Zhang Jian, and Wang Qimin, will grace the stage, adding depth and continuity to the celebrated work.

Under music director and chief conductor Zhang Yi, the national

ballet's symphony orchestra will provide powerful live accompaniment, permitting the audience to reexperience beloved melodies.

"*The Red Detachment of Women* is a milestone in Chinese ballet, a testament to the collective creativity of New China's artists. It has inspired generations and garnered global acclaim. Our mission is to preserve and renew this classic, ensuring that its emotional and artistic power remains ever-vibrant," says Feng Ying, artistic director and the head of the National Ballet of China, which was founded in 1959, 10 years after the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Based on a 1961 film of the same name, *The Red Detachment of Women* tells the story of a rural girl, Wu Qionghua, who escapes a life of slavery and joins an all-female Communist Party army battalion led by commander Hong Changqing on Hainan Island during the civil war in the early 1930s.

Feng, a renowned ballerina, can still recall the first time she played Wu. It was May 23, 1992, when *The Red Detachment of Women* was being restaged after a 10-year gap.

"The first ballerina to play Wu Qionghua was Bai Shuxiang, and she set a high standard for those who followed her in the role. *The Red Detachment of Women* is a Chinese story and incorporates a range of dance elements including classical Chinese dance movements, as well as movements borrowed from martial arts and Chinese operas," says Feng, who is known for playing the lead in Western ballets like *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* and *Don Quixote*.

"I was very lucky to be trained by the established ballet dancers and artists who created *The Red Detachment of Women*, such as choreogra-



Left top and above: Dancers of the National Ballet of China rehearse *The Red Detachment of Women* in Beijing. Right: Feng Ying, artistic director and the head of the National Ballet of China, coaches ballerina Qiu Yunting.

pher Li Chengxiang," says Feng. "The ballet plays a crucial role in training new generations of dancers, instilling in them the techniques, expressions and cultural narratives that are integral to the company's heritage."

Feng says that to better understand and portray the female soldiers, the creative team and cast members received military training, allowing them to observe and experience women soldiers in person. "The dancers took off their ballet shoes and put on army boots. They received strict training just like soldiers," says Feng, adding

that they also traveled to Hainan, where the story takes place.

Zhang Jian has played Wu many times. The former principal ballerina and the deputy director of the national ballet will return to the stage to reprise the role for the latest celebration.

"Ever since I joined the company, I wanted to play Wu Qionghua, a woman who is fearless and brave, battling a miserable fate. In 2002, I was proud to be able to fulfill that wish," says the dancer, who began to train at the age of 9 and graduated from Beijing Dance Academy in 1996. "The ballet embodies the rev-

olutionary spirit and patriotic fervor of its time, and celebrates the resilience and bravery of the Red Army's female soldiers, which resonates deeply with national identity and memory. It represents the artistic innovation of early Chinese ballet, blending Western techniques with Chinese themes and storytelling, setting a precedent for future works in the genre."

Feng says that *The Red Detachment of Women* is still evolving, as a new generation of dancers performs the piece. One is the current principal ballerina of the company, 29-year-old Qiu Yunting, who will

also be part of the celebration, and will play Wu.

"Though the story is far removed from my life, my main inspiration comes from the black-and-white movie, and the experiences passed down by veteran dancers. Wu Qionghua is like a role model for today's young people, as they fight for their future. She's full of positive attitude and energy," says Qiu.

In addition to Wu, the ballet tells the story of Hong, a key character who is a revolutionary leader and a dedicated Communist, and who plays a pivotal role in supporting Wu and leading the fight against oppressive forces in the story. He embodies ideals of resistance and dedication to the cause of revolution, and is generally played by senior ballet dancers like Wang Caijun and Ma Xiaodong, the latter being the company's principal male dancer.

"I have toured with this classic nationwide and abroad. The warm feedback from the audience proves that it is still as relevant and popular as ever," says Ma, adding that many young people are coming to watch the performance, and have been inspired to learn more about history and China's martyrs.

Ma grew up by watching superhero movies like many young Chinese. When he saw the film version of *The Red Detachment of Women*, he was intrigued by Hong, a hero who rescues Wu Qionghua and is captured and killed by the enemy.

"I grew up in a totally different world compared to Wu and Hong. In playing the role of Hong, I have fulfilled my wish to be a hero on stage," Ma adds.

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Cai Guo-Qiang's big bang of art, science and AI

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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When art meets science, the result can be explosive and revolutionary.

This fusion lies at the heart of *Cai Guo-Qiang: A Material Odyssey*, an exhibition currently on at the University of Southern California Pacific Asia Museum, which runs until next June.

The exhibition goes beyond the traditional gallery format, merging art with chemistry, physics and artificial intelligence to display the pioneering work of contemporary artist Cai Guo-Qiang, who uses gunpowder in his creations.

"Cai's work is a masterful demonstration of how art and science can converge to create something entirely new," Bethany Montagano, director of USC Museums, told reporters at a preview event on Sept 13.

"We are excited to host this transformative exhibition, which not only celebrates Cai's

innovative use of gunpowder, but also highlights the important research and collaboration happening at the intersection of art, science and AI," she says.

A Material Odyssey features a series of gunpowder test pieces produced for the Getty Research Institute to study.

The 67-year-old was born in Quanzhou, Fujian province, and trained in stage design at the Shanghai Theatre Academy in the early 1980s. From December 1986 to September 1995, he worked in Japan and has lived and worked in New York since then.

Best known for his use of gunpowder in intricate paintings, drawings and large-scale pyrotechnic performances, Cai has spent decades pushing the boundaries of art by incorporating volatile materials into his creative process.

These materials have been central to his philosophy and creative practice, symbolizing both destruction and creation.

"I am often inspired by the calmness and the natural strength manifested in the work after the vibrant colors fade. Changes in the gunpowder bring about uncontrollability and unpredictability, which is what makes working with gunpowder so fascinating. The change itself is part of my work," Cai says.

According to Rachel Rivenc, lead curator and head of Conservation and Preservation at the Getty Research Institute, *A Material Odyssey* highlights something rarely seen in exhibitions: science as a tool for understanding artistic techniques, and presents imagery that explores the molecular behavior of gunpowder, and its evolution as an artistic medium in the artist's hands.

"Cai has embraced the use of gunpowder because he wanted to relinquish control over the creative process. No matter how precisely a gunpowder drawing is planned, the results are still unpredictable," Rivenc says.

"The awe-inspiring nature of Cai Guo-Qiang's work embodies many of the values we hold dear at our museum," says Rebecca Hall, USC PAM curator. "His gunpowder drawings and paintings, when presented alongside the museum's permanent collection and housed in this historic building, remind us that as we push the boundaries of art and science, we remain deeply connected to the wisdom and creativity of the past."

The event serves as a companion to the artist's latest project, *WE ARE: Explosion Event for PST ART*, which lit up the skies above the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Sept 15. Integrating AI-driven choreography with fireworks, drones and data science, the free daytime performance commissioned by Getty launched PST ART's new theme, Art & Science Collide, in a spectacular fashion.

"Today, with the rapid rise of technologies like AI, culture and the arts often seem powerless. I



A visitor takes a photo of the exhibition during the preview event for *Cai Guo-Qiang: A Material Odyssey* on Sept 13 at the USC Pacific Asia Museum. **RENA LI** / CHINA DAILY

hope *WE ARE* will serve as a monumental gesture of how the art world can merge the virtual and real in this new AI-driven era, while also standing as a strong voice and decisive action in these turbulent times," says Cai, who has been researching

AI since 2017.

The event was one of the first large-scale daytime fireworks display in the US to incorporate drone formations equipped with pyrotechnic devices, according to Katherine Fleming, president and CEO of the J Paul Getty Trust.

CULTURE

Families fired up about ceramics

Craftspeople talk about pressure, satisfaction of continuing ancestors' work, **Cai Hong** reports in Jingdezhen.

Like most, Sun Lixin, the eldest child in the family-run businesses in Jingdezhen, east China's Jiangxi province, was born with a mission — succession.

The firstborn son was followed by a brother and a sister in a family that has made porcelain for four generations and was trained to inherit the family's ceramic making skills since he was a child.

His father, Sun Tongxin, has a mastery skill for blue and white painting on porcelain and was a trailblazer in splash ink painting on ceramic panels, blending the innovative contemporary high-temperature technique with the expressive methods of traditional Chinese blue and white ink painting. One of Sun Sr's pieces was collected by the Palace Museum in Beijing.

Ink color is one of the color painting decoration methods of ceramics. It refers to a kind of porcelain painting technique that uses thick or bright black as the main colorant to paint on ceramics, presenting a light-black ink effect. It has a strong literati charm and an artistic appeal, showing an elegant and simple, green and subtle aesthetic feeling.

"I grew up in an environment surrounded by ceramics and ceramists," Sun Lixin, 57, said.

He recalled that he did homework at the workshops where his parents worked when primary school finished. The three went home together after the adults got off work.

In 1976, then premier Zhou Enlai decreed the protection for traditional craftsmanship of porcelain production.

Thanks to the regulation, a group of teens in Jingdezhen was recruited by the local 10 state-owned porcelain factories to be trained in pottery-making techniques.

"Though being wet behind the ears, I was thrilled to be an apprentice in a state-owned factory," Sun Lixin said.

He was only 13.

"I liked to learn how to make ceramics, such as drawing, throwing and painting as many of my peers were also in the factory," he said.

Sun Lixin's teacher was his father, who was very strict with the naughty boy. Luckily, his peer apprentices, in his words, learned from their parents' friends, who were very friendly.

"I was always sniveling as my father bawled me out for doing things frolicsome with other children," Sun Lixin said. "One day, I ran away from home, saying to myself that I was damned if I was going to do pottery again."

However, he had no choice but to return home and continue his apprenticeship and his father had more teachers for the boy to sharpen his skill of Chinese painting.

Sun Lixin was a fast learner and became a skilled porcelain painter.

Time of change

But things turned bad in Jingdezhen in the late 1980s and early 90s as all the workers were laid off due to the restructuring of the state-owned factories. Sun Lixin and other potters had to do something else to make a living.

An entrepreneur from Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong province, invited Sun Lixin to work for him, offering a fat salary of more than 2,000 yuan (\$275) a month.

"His offer is very impressive to me. You know, I earned a monthly income of only 300 yuan in Jingdezhen at that time," Sun said.

His parents were also among the massive layoffs, instead bringing home the bacon by drawing for some local people who were the first to run their own porcelain workshops.

Sun Lixin returned to Jingdezhen from Guangzhou when he was told that his grandfather was fatally ill.

"I am his firstborn grandson, whom the big family has great expectation on," Sun said.

He took with him all the money he had saved over several years in Guangzhou and rebuilt the kiln that the family had before 1949.

Most of the Sun family members are artisans. Sun Lixin's uncle has a mastery of porcelain pigments.

In January 1975, the Jingdezhen-based ceramic research institute affiliated to China's former ministry of light industry was assigned the special mission of making porcelain for Chairman Mao Zedong. More than 100 sets of porcelain, or nearly 10,000 pieces, which were coded as 7501, were produced in a year.

Sun Lixin's mother, who is specialized in underglaze polychrome enamels, was in the team for the important assignment.

"In my childhood, I saw my mom doing underglaze enameling on a very thin piece in the middle of night. There was a slight sound of cracking. I saw a tear rolling down her cheek," Sun Lixin recalled compassionately.

"Flaws make porcelain prices drop, so no single flaw is allowed on ceramic pieces," he said.

But Sun has kept piles of porcelain wares with flaws, which, in his words, remind him of the time and effort his parents invested.

"Hard work and dedication is the character of the Sun family to the core. I have a sense of purpose for making the family craftsmanship better," Sun Lixin said.

Family craftsmanship

He is devoted to making the Sun's kiln not only a workshop but also a place for doing research on ceramic making.

Sun Lixin's modern aesthetic perfectly complements the craftsmanship of the classic designs from Chinese ink painting.

His ceramic panels are widely collected by museums such as the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, as well as individuals. He is one of the inheritors of intangible cultural heritage conferred by the Jingdezhen authorities.

In 2006, the Jingdezhen ceramic hand-making technique was included in the first batch of traditional skills in China's national intangible cultural heritage list. There are 1,899 inheritors of Jingdezhen's intangible cultural heritage, more than 90 percent of whom are engaged in the inheritance of ceramic hand-making skills.

When Sun Lixin found that his son was not into

the porcelain making, he and his wife decided to have one more child. They had a daughter when Sun Lixin was 41.

The girl's early interest in drawing gives her parents and grandparents pleasure. "It seems that drawing is in her bones. She is making sketches much better than I do," Sun Lixin said as he beamed with pride.

While his 24-year-old son was studying biological engineering in Dalian city in Northeast China's Liaoning province, his daughter, 16, is learning fine art in Beijing.

As the intangible cultural heritage inheritor, Sun Lixin is taking on six young people as his apprentices. They learn to draw the traditional Chinese patterns such as lotus, peony, peach, bat and persimmon.

"These flora and animals used as decorative motifs on porcelain pieces are symbols of traditional Chinese culture, which young people had better have a understanding of," Sun Lixin said.

The Bat, for example, represents good fortune, lotus stands for good luck and the peach means longevity.

"I am obliged to tell them what I know about traditional Chinese culture," he said.

Linglong ware

Lyu Yating, 31, is also the firstborn of a family that makes ceramics for five generations. She has a younger sister who does not find porcelain making appealing, as well as a younger brother who is still a middle school student.

Shortly after graduating from a university where she studied international business management in the United Kingdom in 2014, the 21-year-old Lyu returned to Jingdezhen to take over the family business. "My mother told me that my father, 62, was out of sorts as he always put his nose to the grindstone," she said.

Lyu's father started the Fuyu blue and white linglong ceramic company in the 1990s when the state-owned porcelain factories could not survive. He recruited all six of his brothers and sisters who were laid off from the factories, as well as other skilled artisans.

Jingdezhen is the only place where linglong porcelain is produced. Grain-sized holes are hollowed out in the thin roughcast and covered with several layers of glaze when ceramists make linglong porcelain, also known as a "porcelain inlaid with glass". It is famous for its exquisite carving patterns and glittering, translucent appeal. The process requires a high level of craftsmanship.

Linglong porcelain is one of the most famous types of ceramics Jingdezhen produces. The others include famille-rose porcelain, blue-white porcelain and color-glazed porcelain.

Like Sun Lixin, Lyu also grew up at the ceramic-making workshop.

At that time, she dreamed of doing something different from what her parents did. The young artisan said: "I wanted to be independent."

But she has no heart to let her parents down. The Lyu family has a formula for glaze handed down from her great-great-grandfather.

"After all, I am the eldest child and my father's technique should be passed on. Our family business is well established in Jingdezhen," Lyu said.

She feels a sense of pride when she sees Chinese porcelain, especially items made in Jingdezhen, exhibited in foreign museums.

Lyu started studying ceramic making comprehensively — the way to make the linglong glaze in particular — shortly after coming back to Jingdezhen.

"Though I had no experience for ceramic making at that time, I was of intellectual curiosity and thought outside the box," she said.

The family business produces daily use porcelain at its production lines. At the same time, Lyu has a team focusing on research and development.

She and her team have been experimenting with new media to achieve the best effects for linglong porcelain.

"I want to find a type of glaze that can make the linglong ceramic more beautiful and more translucent," Lyu said.

"Fortunately, the production of the daily use ceramics has increased significantly and made big profit so that investment in R&D is possible," Lyu said.

New ways forward

Now the young entrepreneur is dedicating herself to building brands as she knows that her production lines cannot churn out as much as the companies in Dehua, Fujian province, and Chaozhou, Guangdong province. The two places have a pile-it-high-and-sell-it-cheap strategy.

"I don't want to be an original equipment manufacturer. Instead, I want to sell our brands overseas," she said.

Lyu described herself as a well balanced person who is calm and reasonable and shows good judgment.

"I hope that products of intangible cultural heritage can be salable rather than merely a symbol. In so doing, people can understand what the charm of intangible cultural heritage is," Lyu said.

Lyu, also a designated inheritor of intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen, is ambitious to make ceramics that could be handed down from generation to generation.

"I am grateful to my father who has created such a wonderful company," she said.

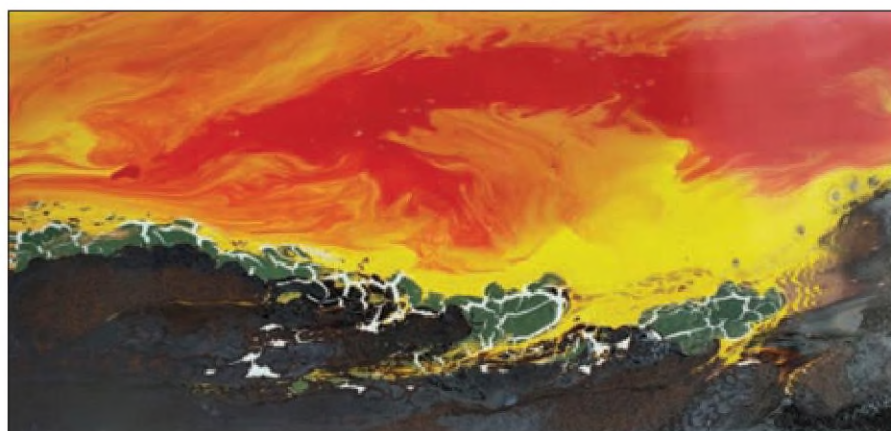
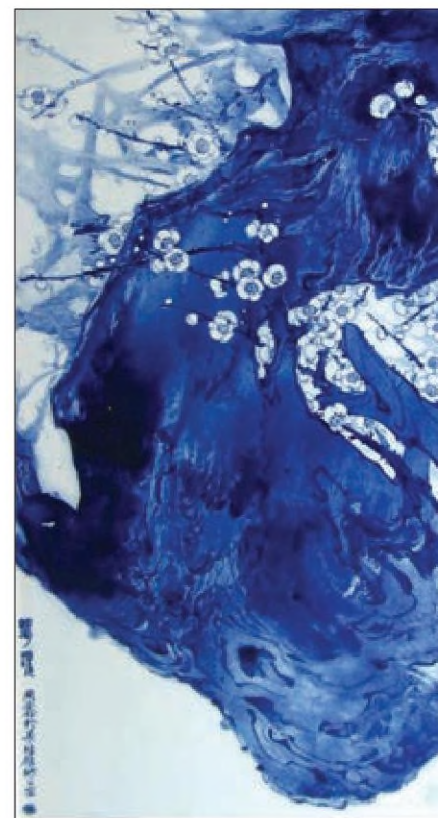
Her company has four brands; one started by her father and the other three by her. She is pouring a lot of effort into developing products such as coffee and tea sets, jardinières and copies of antique porcelain.

In Lyu's words, the spirit of artisans means their craftsmanship and pursuit of excellence.

Lyu received offers for graduate study from four foreign universities after her undergraduate education in the UK. When asked whether she regrets not undertaking graduate studies, Lyu said she had no choice but inherit the family business.

"Now I am having a great life, and I have no regrets," she said.

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Clockwise from top: Jingdezhen's porcelain culture inheritor Sun Lixin at his workshop; Lyu Yating, owner of Fuyu Blue and White Linglong Ceramics Co. Ltd in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, at her workshop; Winter Sweet, a piece of blue-and-white ink painting ceramist Sun Tongxin does on a porcelain panel; A ceramic painting made by Sun Lixin shows volcanic eruptions; A linglong vase with chrysanthemums and rice grain pattern is made by Lyu Yating and her team; Sun Lixin's ceramic artwork featuring a Buddha. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY