

Going back in time

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RMB, stock market rally amid big boost

Analysts say decisive policy stance to shore up the economy bodes well for investment inflow

By ZHOU LANXU zhoulanxv@chinadaily.com.cn

The renminbi rallied to its strongest level in more than a year and Chinese equities continued their rebound on Wednesday, after a potent policy package lifted investors' confidence in the Chinese economy, which is expected to sail through headwinds.

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Economists, investment banks and asset managers said that policymakers' more decisive stance to shore up the economy, a global interest rate cut cycle, and low asset valuations have combined to make it a potentially good time to invest in Chinese financial assets, which are expected to attract more foreign inflow in the months ahead.

However, they cautioned that the forecast may be contingent upon the implementation of further policy support to address economic challenges, with the most urgent priorities being additional fiscal spending to bolster domestic demand and direct funding to alleviate property sector woes.

On Wednesday, the renminbi, or Chinese yuan, rose to 6.9951 against the US dollar in the offshore market, up 158 basis points from the previous close and past the 7-per-dollar milestone for the first time in 16 months. The onshore yuan reached 7.0012.

Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOCI China, said the renminbi's rally is attributable to both Tuesday's domestic policy release, which strengthened investors' confidence in China's economy, and the United States Federal Reserve's interest rate cut last week, which narrowed the yield spreads between US and Chinese bonds.

Looking ahead, Guan said the renminbi is likely to register two-way fluctuations against the dollar, with limited possibility of one-sided, drastic appreciation because uncertainties remain surrounding the Fed's pace of rate cuts, including that the Fed might even reconsider rate hikes if the US economy turns out to be overheated.

Moreover, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, is expected to take measures to prevent any renminbi exchange rate overshooting if needed, and has accumulated rich experience in this regard, said Guan, who had served as head of the Balance of Payments Department at the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

Guan added that in the base case scenario, in which the US achieves a soft landing while the Fed continues rate cuts, foreign institutions may continue to boost holdings in renminbi-denominated bonds, especially treasury bonds.

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Future of travel



A man tries his hand at simulated driving of a Fuxing high-speed train on Tuesday at the booth of China Railway in Berlin, Germany, during the 2024 International Trade Fair for Transport Technology, which runs through Friday. REN PENGFEI / XINHUA

China's modernization efforts create opportunities for world

My family's connection to China dates back to 1952, when my grandfather made the first trade with China by selling wool tops. This first deal laid the groundwork for future partnerships. In 1953, my grandfather led the "Icebreaking Mission", which was crucial in signing the first trade agreement between the newly founded People's Republic of China and the West.

Over the past seven decades, the China that my grandfather first got to know has undergone huge transformation, and as the Chinese people celebrate the 75th anniversary of the PRC this October, it is important to recognize that the modernization of a country with a population of 1.4 billion is not just about internal development — it has implications for the entire global order.

China's modernization is redraw-

WORLD WATCH By Jack Perry Jr

ing the international landscape in profound ways. The country's focus on technology, green development and infrastructure is a model for other developing nations to follow. By combining innovation with practical application, China is demonstrating how modernization can be achieved without sacrificing sustainability or social equity. As China prepares and plans for the next 30 years, we will see the renminbi being used to settle trade and China as the leader in currency settlement.

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Bombings continue



People inspect a destroyed warehouse on Wednesday at the site of an Israeli airstrike in Jiyeh, Lebanon, along the highway linking Beirut with the southern city of Sidon. Israel began the third day of strikes in southern Lebanon hours after Hezbollah confirmed the death of a senior commander in an airstrike on Beirut. Lebanon said 15 people were killed in Wednesday's strikes. MAHMOUD ZAYYAT / AFP See story, page 6

FM Wang Yi: China-EU ties benefit both sides

By MINLUZHANG at United Nations minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with a top representative of the European Union on Wednesday and stressed that stronger China-EU cooperation benefits both sides and meets international expectations.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met with Josep Borrell, high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Wang expressed appreciation for Borrell's commitment to actively developing relations with China; viewing the country's development objectively and positively; and promoting China-EU cooperation and mutual trust.

Borrell also emphasized that China and Europe are partners, not opponents.

"China appreciates that," said Wang.

China and Europe should "strengthen mutual trust, enhance cooperation, adhere to mutual respect, learn from each other, and leverage each other's strengths to compensate for their weaknesses," said Wang, adding that this will "contribute to stabilizing

We hope the EU will maintain strategic autonomy, eliminate external interference, and promote the healthy and stable development of China-EU relations."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

international and regional situations and promoting human development and progress."

"We hope the EU will maintain strategic autonomy, eliminate external interference, and promote the healthy and stable development of China-EU relations," Wang said.

The meeting came as the European Commission was planning to impose tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on Chinese-made electric vehicles, on top of the EU's standard 10 percent car import duty.

Germany's Economics Minister Robert Habeck last week called for the EU and China to reach a political solution to the issue of tariffs on electric vehicles.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez earlier this month also said

at a news briefing before concluding his visit to China that Spain is re-evaluating its stance on the EU's import tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles.

Sanchez urged both EU member states and the European Commission to reconsider their approach and stressed the importance of Brussels and Beijing finding a compromise to prevent a trade war.

Borrell said that China is already a strong country and will continue to grow stronger. "The world needs China, and Europe should strengthen cooperation with China," he said. "Countries need to work together to maintain peace and security."

Wang and Borrell also discussed their views on the Ukraine crisis. Wang said that China has always maintained an objective and fair position on the Ukraine crisis, is committed to promoting the cooling of the situation, and will not give up efforts to strive for peace.

Wang also met the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday.

He said he rejected attempts by the United States and a few other countries to use the Xinjiang issue to "attack and smear" China's human rights record at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) held in Geneva on Tuesday.

Wang said that more than 100 countries voiced their support for

China's position and opposed the politicization of human rights at the 57th session of the UNHRC on Tuesday.

Nearly 80 countries, including the majority of Muslim countries, read a joint statement in support of China. More than 20 countries expressed their support for China's position in different ways, opposing the politicization of human rights issues and interference in the internal affairs of other countries under the pretext of human rights, said Wang.

He said the actions of the United States and a few other countries expose their double standards to the world.

"If the US is concerned about the human rights of Muslims, why does it continuously provoke or support wars in regions like the Middle East, causing large numbers of Muslim civilian casualties?" Wang said.

"Why does it turn a blind eye to the historical injustices suffered by Arab people and fail to support Palestine's bid for full UN membership? And why does it not play its role in achieving a permanent cease-fire in Gaza and a complete withdrawal of troops?" Wang said.

China is "willing to engage in dialogue on human rights with all countries on the basis of equality. China's doors are open to the world, and we welcome friends from all nations to visit and see for themselves," said Wang.

NUTRITION PROJECT GIVES RURAL KIDS ENOUGH FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Students' growth boosted by school meals that use local produce, help create jobs

By YAO YUXIN in Xiangxi, Hunan yaoyuxin@chinadaily.com.cn

At Shaping village kindergarten in a remote area of Hunan province, a simple meal of pickles and rice was often the only food children received at school. In the past, such a meager children's lunch was not unusual in underde-



veloped Yongshun county, nestled in Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture.

A two-hour drive along winding mountain roads separates this

rural kindergarten from the nearest county hub. Most of its pupils are "left-behind" children, raised by grandparents who often sent them to school on empty stomachs.

Headmaster Peng Nanguai recalled the children were often sickly and shorter than the standard height for their age. In flu season, many missed school due to colds and fever.

"Poverty and malnutrition combined cast long shadows over these preschool kids from isolated mountainous regions, severely stunting their growth," said Yi Zungang, director of the prefecture's foreign investment and aid project affairs center.

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PAGE TWO

Nutrition: Building healthier future for children

From page 1

In recent years, the Chinese government has prioritized nutrition for children, launching policies like the "nutrition package" for infants aged 6 to 24 months and the National Nutrition Improvement Program for rural students aged 6 to 15.

However, children aged 3 to 5 have fallen through the gaps.

About 4.8 million Chinese children under 5 still suffer from stunting and wasting, the "State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024" report revealed.

Children in rural and remote areas are especially vulnerable due to food insecurity, inadequate care, poor living conditions, and the urban-rural divide.

A pilot project for nutritious school meals, jointly run by the World Food Programme and Hunan province, is working to bridge the gap in Xiangxi. Since 2018, a daily subsidy of 4 yuan (\$0.57) per child has provided rural preschoolers aged 3 to 5, with a more varied lunch, along with breakfast and afternoon snacks. The initiative has dramatically improved the children's nutrition.

Around 7,348 preschool children from Yongshun and Longshan counties in the ethnic minority autonomous region have benefited from the program. Over 80 percent are left-behind children, and more than a half of them come from low-income families.

"We believe that early intervention in the development of rural children is a crucial investment in human capital," said Zhao Bing, representative of the WFP China Office. "It's a key strategy to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and achieve social equity," he said.

Seasonal local produce

Nestled in the mountains, a long, narrow path leads to the entrance to Shaping village kindergarten. Beside it, a garden thrives with rows of corn, peanuts, peppers, and long beans, interspersed with peach, pear, and pomelo trees. Near the school gate, a fenced area holds chickens and ducks, leisurely pecking at the ground.

Pass the gate, a large poster on a wall immediately catches the eye. It details the principles of balanced meals, encourages healthy eating habits, and offers tips to prevent picky eating for preschool children.

It is noon, and the children are lined up outside the kitchen, waiting for their lunch. A small blackboard hangs by the kitchen window, listing today's menu: chicken stewed with mushrooms, pork ribs stewed with corn, scrambled eggs with tomatoes, and stir-fried cabbage with carrots.

"Back then, we didn't really get nutrition; we just made sure they weren't hungry," said Peng. "Now, we change the menu daily and ensure it is nutritionally balanced."

The menu is carefully crafted by experts from the Normal College of Jishou University in Xiangxi. Lunch typically includes at least one meat dish, one vegetable dish, and soup. The afternoon snack is usually milk or an egg, paired with a small piece of potato, sweet potato, or corn.

Each of the 40 participating kindergartens must use at least 25 different ingredients in their weekly meals, and the quantity is precisely measured in grams. Changed monthly, the menu prioritizes seasonal, locally sourced ingredients for fresh and nutritious meals.

Tian Hong, associate dean of the college and lead writer of the preschoolers' nutrition improvement report, said the children's daily intake of trace elements such as calcium, iron, and zinc, as well as vitamins, generally fell below national standards in the past.

"Children aged 3 to 5 grow fast," Tian said. "Poor nutrition can hinder their growth, affect their learning, and raise their risk of chronic diseases later on."

Balanced diet

It takes a lot of effort to balance the children's nutritional needs, with just the 4-yuan subsidy and locally available ingredients, said Wu Feng'e, a professor of early childhood education at the college and the main designer of the preschool menu.

Chinese Dietary Guidelines recommend eating seafood at least twice a week. But in inland Xiangxi, fish and shrimp are hard to come by and costly. To ensure the kids get enough calcium, Wu adds soy products like tofu to their lunches every day. She also substitutes refined rice and flour with whole grains to cut sugar intake from carbohydrates.

Initially, these measures faced skepticism. Some rural parents didn't understand why their children were eating cheaper whole grains that no one bothered with in the countryside, believing refined rice and flour were better. Some kindergarten teachers even asked if eating tofu daily might cause kidney stones.

To ensure accurate meal servings, Wu buys the ingredients, cooks them at home, weighs them, and distributes child-size portions on a plate. This attention to detail helps her easily spot when kindergartens try to cut corners. If meals don't meet the standards, she tags the headmaster in a WeChat



Children have their free nutritious lunch at a village kindergarten in Longshan town, Xiangxi, Hunan province, on June 27. YAO YUXIN / CHINA DAILY



Above: A child has his free lunch at a kindergarten in Congjiang, Guizhou province, on Sept 15, 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Right: Children wait to get their nutritious lunch at a kindergarten in Xiangxi, on June 25. YAO YUXIN / CHINA DAILY



group shared with local government officials, and requests corrections.

Preschools in the program also have to upload 10 photos a day of the meals and children eating them to the School Nutrition Improvement Initiative platform. Managed by the China Development Research Foundation, and initiated by the State Council's Development Research Center, this system ensures that meal standards are consistently met through close supervision.

These efforts have drawn some parents like Xiang Hongxia to bring her 3-year-old daughter back from the county school to the rural kindergarten for the better meals.

"I want her to grow tall, be healthy, and enjoy a happy childhood," Xiang said. The young mother added that moving back home saved the family rent and living costs, and also allowed them to care for elderly relatives.

From farm to plate

Peng Jianghua usually gets a call from headmaster Peng Nanguai at night, asking for a chicken or duck for the children's lunch the next day. The following morning, she brings along a fowl when she drops her 6-year-old daughter at the kindergarten.

The mother has been supplying meat to the kindergarten for five years. She has over 100 chickens and ducks, and feeds them corn and grains, but never commercial feed.

The garden by the kindergarten entrance is tended to by 68-year-old caretaker Li Hongnian, whose grandson attends the school. Every morning, he picks the freshest vegetables from the garden and delivers them to the kindergarten. He never uses chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

As relatives of the students, Li and Peng have been selected to provide healthy ingredients for the children's meals. The project requests participating preschools use at least 30 percent of their subsidies to purchase produce from smallholder farmers at market prices.

"To supply produce to the kindergarten, being a close relative of a student is a must," said Zhang Ye, deputy director of the prefecture's foreign investment and aid project affairs center, who has followed the program since 2018. "This way, we ensure food safety and help parents with jobs and extra income," Zhang added.

The nutrition program tries to involve the poorest and most disadvantaged parents, especially those with limited market access. The project also focuses on supporting women. Every year, each household receives 500 yuan worth of seeds and organic fertiliz-

"We believe that early intervention in the development of rural children is a crucial investment in human capital. The project fits seamlessly with China's past poverty reduction efforts and the current push for rural revitalization."

Zhao Bing, representative of the World Food Programme China Office



A girl enjoys her lunch at Rainbow Kindergarten in Furong town, Xiangxi, on June 26. ZHANG YIWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

er, and undergoes at least two training sessions to improve their farming skills. This has helped expand and improve the variety and quality of meat and vegetables on children's plates.

Before joining the program, Peng Jianghua worked in a shoe factory in East China's Zhejiang province and only traveled home for the Chinese New Year. She felt a deep sadness about her struggle to connect with her 15-year-old son, a left-behind child. Finding work at home was tough, and her son was raised by his grandparents.

After returning home in 2017 to give birth to a daughter, her desire to stay and support her children grew stronger. By supplying chickens and ducks to her daughter's preschool, she not only earns income of about 6,000 yuan per year but also gets to stay with her children.

"I could earn more working away," Peng Jianghua said, "but I'd rather stay home."

Grandpa Li no longer has to make long trips to the market or spend the whole day selling his produce. He said it saves him a lot of time, allowing him to focus on other farm work or just relax.

Sometimes, local government cafeterias also purchase surplus produce from the smallholder farmers, boosting their income.

"The project fits seamlessly with China's past poverty reduction efforts and the current push for rural revitalization," said Zhao, from the WFP China Office.

Food awareness

At 2:30 pm, children at Rainbow Kindergarten in Furong town wake from their nap. The teacher shows them how to make ice cream cones with sweet potatoes and cantaloupe.

She starts with a cone wrapped in pink Hello Kitty paper, fills it with mashed sweet potatoes, and adds diced cantaloupe on top as "sprinkles". The kids enjoy the "ice cream" for their afternoon snack, along with a small bottle of milk.

"Meals need to be both nutritious and appealing," said Xiang Haiyan, headmaster

of the kindergarten. After three years in the program, the preschool can now make dishes that meet nutrition guidelines. In class, teachers educate the children about nutrition, and in the hallway there are displays of vegetables made by the kids.

Zhang, the local official, proudly noted that the snacks once sold outside the school gate are gone. Before, the children were tempted by vendors with unhealthy fried foods, but now the main sight after school is parents and cars picking up their children.

"The health and nutrition awareness of children, parents, and teachers has greatly improved," he said.

Snack sellers have also disappeared from outside Ximiao Kindergarten in Miaotian town. Teacher Yan Zhilan once clashed with a popcorn vendor who set up at the school entrance and constantly shouted through a megaphone.

"I told him to leave because snacks aren't healthy for the kids. He refused, so I told all the children not to buy from him. He didn't sell a single bag, and he hasn't returned since," Yan said.

Children no longer ask for snacks or beverages on their way to school or heading back home, she said. More parents are buying milk for their children and asking the kindergarten for cooking tips, as their kids love the meals.

According to the nutrition assessment released by the Normal College of Jishou University in late August, children in the intervention group show greater improvement than those in the control group across several areas. The improvements are in areas such as micronutrients, stunted growth, underweight, wasting, overweight, and obesity. Notably, the anemia rate among these children has dropped to zero.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government is increasing its investment in early childhood education. In 2022, national funding for preschool education reached 298.22 billion yuan, accounting for 6.2 percent of total education spending — a 1.8 fold increase on 2013.

TOP NEWS

PLA: Missile launch achieved desired goals

By ZHAO LEI
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The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force launched on Wednesday morning an intercontinental ballistic missile into open waters in the Pacific Ocean, marking a major display of its strategic deterrence prowess.

The PLA Rocket Force announced in a brief news release that the missile, carrying dummy warheads, lifted off at 8:44 am and then hit a designated area in the waters. It did not give more details about the operation, such as the missile's type and the location where the missile was launched.

The news release said the missile test was part of the PLA Rocket Force's annual training plan and was intended to examine the weapon's capability and performance as well as the training level of the troops. The test had achieved its goals, it added.

China notified relevant nations about the test in advance, according to the PLA Rocket Force.

Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, said on Wednesday that the test "is in line with international law and international practice, and is not directed against any country or target".

This is the first time in more than four decades that China made public its flight test of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The last time the nation made such a flight test public was in May 1980, when the baseline model of the DF-5 was fired from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China and hit a preset area in the South Pacific after flying more than 9,000 kilometers. That was the first time a DF-5 missile carried out a full-range flight test.

Song Zhongping, a military affairs commentator and retired PLA Rocket Force officer, said a full-range flight test is a necessary and important step in verifying the capability and performance of any new type of strategic missile.

"Though China's intercontinental ballistic missiles have good reliability and strong power, we need a certain number of full-range tests to check their operational readiness," he said.



The test has represented the Rocket Force's combat readiness and its ability to deter nuclear blackmail."

Gao Zhuo, a military observer in Shanghai

According to Song, China's nuclear-capable strategic missiles are characterized by their might and rapid deployment readiness.

"They form the country's strategic nuclear force that can be launched from air, sea and land, laying a significant foundation for national security," he said.

Gao Zhuo, a military observer in Shanghai, said that Wednesday's test was very likely the first full-range flight of China's new-generation intercontinental ballistic missile model and demonstrated the nation's world-class technologies.

"The test has represented the Rocket Force's combat readiness and its ability to deter nuclear blackmail. It will also accumulate experience and data for the research and development of next-generation intercontinental ballistic missiles," he said.

According to information published previously by the Chinese military, the PLA Rocket Force now has multiple types of ballistic missiles with intercontinental ranges, including the DF-31AG, the DF-5B and the DF-41.

The latest and mightiest in the Rocket Force's arsenal — the DF-41 — has widely been considered by military observers as one of the most advanced and lethal weapons on the planet.

Only three countries — the United States, Russia and China — possess such destructive hardware, which serves as the ultimate deterrent in war. The DF-41's counterparts are the US LGM-30G Minuteman III and Russia's RS-24 Yars.

The road-mobile, solid-propellant DF-41, which is carried by a 16-wheel gigantic launch vehicle, was declassified and unveiled at the National Day parade in October 2019.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (center) attends a high-level Security Council meeting on the Ukraine issue on Wednesday at the United Nations headquarters in New York. MINLU ZHANG / CHINA DAILY

Beijing urges measures to end Ukraine crisis

Global consensus sought on cease-fire, political settlement

By WANG QINGYUN
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Beijing has reiterated its appeal to speed up efforts in de-escalating the Ukraine crisis and facilitating peace talks, as the Russia-Ukraine conflict has dragged on for more than two years with no immediate resolution in sight.

The international community should work together to build stronger consensus on a cease-fire and promote a political settlement, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a United Nations Security Council high-level meeting on Tuesday in New York.

The prolonged crisis "adds to the suffering of the people, inflicts further damage on the region, and brings greater instability to the world", Wang said.

The top priority is to follow the three principles of "no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party", which were put forward by

China and Brazil in a consensus document on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis in May, the foreign minister said.

Parties involved should avoid using weapons of mass destruction and refrain from attacking civilians, civilian facilities and peaceful nuclear facilities, such as nuclear power plants, he said.

"The more weapons are delivered to the battlefield, the harder it will be to achieve a cease-fire — this is a reality we must confront," Wang said, urging all parties to abandon Cold War confrontational thinking and play a constructive role in de-escalating tensions.

Pointing out that holding dialogue and negotiations is the only way out of the crisis, he warned that if peace talks fail to happen in time, misunderstanding and misjudgment would accumulate, risking a greater crisis.

More and more countries in the Global South are working together to create favorable conditions for

restoring peace, Wang said, adding that the Global South has suffered seriously from the ongoing crisis, which has made the world economy even more sluggish.

The spillover effect of the crisis must be managed, Wang said. He repeated China's call for concerted international efforts to maintain a stable and smooth global supply chain and protect the interests of developing countries.

He said the international community should strengthen cooperation on energy, finance, trade, food security and the protection of key infrastructure, such as oil and gas pipelines.

"No party should abuse illegal and unilateral sanctions and crack down on normal trade under the pretext of the crisis, let alone divide the world and create exclusive blocs," Wang said.

China is neither the creator of nor a party involved in the Ukraine crisis, he said, adding that the country has played its due part

in addressing the issue by maintaining communications with Russia, Ukraine and other parties and working continuously to advocate peace and bring about dialogue.

The senior diplomat is in New York, as the special representative of President Xi Jinping, to attend the UN Summit of the Future and the general debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, while taking part in a series of other events.

Wang's participation in Tuesday's high-level meeting came two months after he met with then Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba in China, where both sides voiced their hopes for addressing the crisis through negotiations.

Zhao Huirong, a researcher at the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the chances of a resolution of the crisis remain "slim" due to a lack of trust between Russia and Ukraine.

China has persisted in its efforts to promote peace talks, and its position and efforts are gaining recognition from an increasing number of countries, Zhao said.

In another development, Wang also attended the eighth Dialogue of Foreign Ministers of China and the Quartet of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States at the UN headquarters on Tuesday.

Relations: China's advancement benefits all

From page 1

China's Belt and Road Initiative is a clear example of how the country's development is reshaping international trade routes, creating opportunities for countries across Asia, Africa and Europe. It is not just about building roads or railways but about fostering long-term economic partnerships that will benefit all parties involved. China's modernization is deeply connected to its vision of a shared future — one where economic growth, technological innovation and environmental sustainability go hand in hand.

China's expertise in sectors such as electric vehicles, renewable energy and artificial intelligence holds great promise for nations, particularly developing countries that are looking to modernize their own industries. The most significant opportunity lies in China's ability to help other countries

establish new manufacturing models that are both sustainable and efficient. Imagine factories powered entirely by renewable energy, with minimal carbon footprints and reduced labor costs. China has the potential to lead the way in creating these factories, not only within its own borders but internationally.

By exporting technology and expertise, China can help create jobs, spur economic growth and reduce the environmental impact of industrialization worldwide. This is a vision of the future where China's advancements benefit everyone, not just its own population. China's modernization efforts are not inward-looking; they are part of a broader global strategy that recognizes the interconnectedness of the modern world.

At London Export Corporation and the 48 Group, we have always believed in the power of trade to

build bridges between nations. I have seen firsthand how globalization can open new markets and create opportunities for growth. The lessons we have learned are now being applied to other ventures, as we continue to explore ways to expand trade and investment between China and the rest of the world.

Over the years, we have expanded beyond traditional commodity trade into life sciences, biotechnology and high-tech industries. Our company has played a significant role in fostering trade between China and the United Kingdom, with a particular focus on medical technology and data exchange platforms. Through our subsidiary LEC Global Capital, we have also established a fund in China to facilitate investments in critical sectors such as hospitals and high-tech medical facilities.

Looking ahead, I am confident that China's modernization efforts

will continue to drive progress not just at home, but around the globe. As China invests in new energy and sustainable development, it is laying the foundation for a future where economic growth and environmental stewardship go hand in hand.

Our journey with China began in 1952 with a simple trade in wool tops, but today it represents so much more — a commitment to building lasting relationships, sharing knowledge, and working together to solve the challenges of the future.

China's modernization is not just a story of economic growth; it is a story of transformation that has the power to reshape the world. As we move forward, I am excited to see how China's journey will continue to inspire and lead the way for others, and I am proud to be a part of this ongoing relationship.

The author is chairman at The 48 Group and CEO of London Export Corporation. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Policy: Good time to revisit Chinese stocks, expert says

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As of August, overseas institutions' holdings in China's interbank bond market had risen for 12 consecutive months, an increase in foreign holdings of as much as 1.34 trillion yuan (\$190.7 billion), according to the PBOC's Shanghai head office.

The upbeat sentiment was seen in the A-share market as well. The Shanghai Composite Index went up 1.16 percent to Wednesday's close of 2,896.31 points, extending a jump of 4.15 percent on Tuesday, the biggest rise in about four years.

"I believe that this may be a good time to revisit Chinese stocks," said David Chao, global market strategist for the Asia-Pacific region (excluding Japan) at Invesco, a global investment management company.

Chao said China has fired off a meaningful monetary stimulus salvo, which may potentially usher trillions of renminbi in liquidity if fully implemented, sending a strong signal that the government is responding to economic headwinds.

On Tuesday, China's top financial regulators unveiled a set of measures that some analysts said might be the country's biggest monetary stimulus package following the pandemic.

This includes a 20 basis point reduction in the seven-day reverse repo rate, a key policy benchmark of interest rates, as well as a 50 basis point cut to rates on existing mortgages and another 50 basis point cut to the reserve requirement ratio, apart from other steps supportive of the property and stock markets.

The PBOC started to put the package into action by lowering the one-year medium-term lending facility rate, a policy rate, by 30 basis points to 2 percent on Wednesday.

A Goldman Sachs report said on Wednesday that the latest stimulus package would be strong enough to catalyze a policy-induced rally in shares listed in Hong Kong and on the Chinese mainland, though it would be unlikely to "turn things around fundamentally".

The report said a relending program unveiled on Tuesday will allow listed companies to borrow inexpensive money to shore up stock prices and boost investor sentiment, while the stock stabilization fund that is under policy study, if launched, might help fend off systemic risks in the stock market, as indicated by experiences in other markets.

While the PBOC introduced two new policy tools aimed at boosting stock market liquidity, the China Securities Regulatory Commission released a guideline on Tuesday to encourage mergers and acquisitions and a draft rule to strengthen listed companies' market capitalization management.

Yet more could be done, with Goldman Sachs saying that "we would turn more aggressive on A shares when signs of property market stabilization emerge or policy momentum further strengthens".

Ding Shuang, chief economist for Greater China and North Asia at Standard Chartered Bank, underlined the importance of beefing up fiscal support, as "monetary easing would be less effective without proactive fiscal policy".

It is likely that the government will increase bond issuance to accelerate government spending, Ding said, adding that investor sentiment could improve if policymakers decide to broaden the use of bond proceeds, especially to reduce home inventory.

Ding said that Standard Chartered Bank analysts retain the base case forecast that the renminbi will stay within the range of between 7 and 7.1 against the dollar by the end of the year.

Re-creating ancestors

Models unveiled by the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology on Tuesday in Mianchi county, Sanmenxia, Henan province, shows how the appearance of the Yangshao ancestors from over 5,000 years ago was reconstructed for the first time. Scientific analysis of human bones unearthed during the fourth archaeological excavation at the Yangshao Village site, helped in the reconstruction. KANG LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



CHINA

Cadres find meaning in their work among villagers

Bank employees take break from routine jobs to support vitalization project in remote Sichuan community

By CHEN LIANG in Ebian, Sichuan
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On Monday mornings, Zhao Lingfeng embarks on a journey from his home in Chengdu, Sichuan province, boarding a high-speed train bound for Leshan, a city nearly 150 kilometers to the south, together with his colleague Hu Jianyong.

Upon arrival at the Leshan railway station, they meet their local colleague, Shui Wei. Shui drives the other two for another 90 km to Yangziyan village in Ebian Yi autonomous county, which is under the administration of Leshan.

The three stay and work in the mountain village until Fridays, when they head back home.

They are cadres sent to the remote community to support its rural vitalization effort. Shui, an official with the Leshan Intermediate People's Court, is the first Party secretary of the village and the team leader.

After working for more than one year in the village, Zhao, 50, an employee of Bank of Communications' Sichuan branch, has become familiar with his new routines and started enjoying his country life.

Zhao applied to join the bank's rural vitalization project in Ebian because he wanted to experience something different from his routine banking work.

"The work as a grassroots cadre is also challenging," he told China Daily, "but in ways that are totally different from my previous work."

Adapting to country life

According to the village official, the Bank of Communications' Sichuan branch launched its targeted poverty alleviation project in Ebian in 2015, and it has evolved into a rural vitalization campaign since 2021. Collaborating closely with the Leshan court, they have directed their efforts toward supporting Yangziyan, a beautiful community nestled atop Mount Beifeng, offering a panoramic view of Ebian's county seat.

Significant improvements have been made, including the construction of cement roads leading to the villagers' residences, the establishment of a library, as well as the installation of solar-powered streetlights.

Zhao said that the bank also donated two drones for agricultural purposes, enhancing farming practices in the village. These initiatives have not only enhanced the overall infrastructure but have also uplifted the living standards of the residents. As a result, Yangziyan has undergone a remarkable transformation and was listed as a model village by Leshan this year.

Zhao and Hu constitute the bank's second team dispatched to the village. Upon their arrival in July last year, their colleagues from the first team were still there.

The living quarters arranged by the bank within a villager's home were still occupied by their predecessors, Zhao said, so the two had to seek lodging at a tiny inn in Xinchang township, situated about 8 km from the village and adjacent to a busy highway.

"Heavy trucks ferrying sand from the Dadu River or transporting agricultural products ran in an endless stream along the road throughout the night," Zhao said.

"In the first week of our arrival, the incessant rumble of trucks made it challenging to secure a moment of undisturbed rest."

After they moved into the villager's



Clockwise from top left: A stone stairway links the county seat of Ebian Yi autonomous county in Leshan city, Sichuan province, to Yangziyan village. A farmer sorts and packs green chili peppers her family harvested in that morning at Yangziyan village. Zhao Lingfeng (left), a village cadre, talks with two villagers who returned to the village to help their families' harvest. A woman peels corn in her family's new house. PHOTOS BY CHEN LIANG / CHINA DAILY

“Sometimes I could offer advice. More often than not, I can only listen to their concerns with patience.”

Zhao Lingfeng, village cadre in Ebian Yi autonomous county, Sichuan province

home, Zhao and Hu initially opted to pay for meals and dine with their host family. However, as they settled into their new living arrangements, they soon realized that figuring out the logistics of organizing their three daily meals would become an ongoing challenge and a persistent source of concern. "Farmers here can hardly dine on time," Zhao said. "It's a situation that is truly difficult to adjust for we urban residents."

In the midst of the bustling seasons, he said, the villagers typically leave their homes as early as 5 am, often skipping breakfast, simply carrying provisions to the fields. They return home to prepare and have their midday meal between 1 pm and 2 pm, while dinner time ranges from 8 pm to 10 pm.

In December, they moved into the village Party secretary Guo Wengui's new house and their living conditions have become much better.

However, Guo is very busy with his

management work in the community and his wife must tend their fields by herself.

The three figured out a new way to organize their meals. Now each of them will prepare breakfast and dinner for themselves. At noon, they will drive to Xinchang township together and share a meal at a restaurant. "My breakfast is two boiled eggs and a carton of milk," Zhao said. "Dinner is either instant noodles or porridge cooked in a rice cooker."

Zhao leaves his own car at the village, but sometimes will drive it to attend meetings or training sessions held at the county seat of Ebian, which is more than 30 km away.

He and Hu each bought a motorcycle for their daily commute in the community.

Rural business

In addition to acclimatizing to rural living, the greater challenge for them lay in adjusting to the work dynamics and content, Zhao said.

"It often takes a day for a meeting at the county seat and half a day for a meeting at the township," Hu said. "I spent a lot of time adjusting to the pace of work here."

According to Guo, the village consists of 277 households, totaling 866 residents, organized into three groups within the community. Each of the three cadres is responsible for focusing on one group.

Zhao's work centers around the third group comprising 68 households totaling about 280 individuals.

He mentioned spending several months familiarizing himself with each remaining resident, acknowledging that more than half have migrated to cities in pursuit of employment opportunities.

After establishing rapport with the villagers, Zhao discovered that he had been perceived as "the representative from the superior department" and someone they could genuinely depend on. They began approaching him for assistance with various issues, ranging from disputes with neighbors concerning water usage and farmland allocation to family conflicts. "Sometimes I could offer advice," he said. "More often than not, I can only listen to their concerns with patience."

Zhao has successfully forged friendships with several villagers, particularly among the younger generation. He has earned the endearing title of "honororary grandpa" to a three-year-old boy, courtesy of his close friendship with the boy's father, Zhou Wei. At 25, Zhou is the same age as Zhao's daughter.

Zhou is one of the few young villagers who have decided to stay at home instead of finding work in a city. Since 2022, he has been raising pigs in the village, and his farm now has about 80 pigs. "If the price of pork (22 yuan or \$3.12) per kilogram remains stable this year, he might have a decent income in the next one or two years," Zhao said.

Zhou's wife takes care of their son at a rented apartment in Emeishan

city, over one hour's drive from the village. "If the income from pig farming is not good enough, he will leave the village for better work," Zhao said.

The biggest challenge

This year, because of the good price of green chili pepper, one of the major crops planted in the area, many young people have returned home to help with harvesting.

The pepper harvesting season typically spans from July to October, Zhao said. "The labor-intensive process of picking, sorting and packing the chili peppers keeps the villagers occupied from dawn until dusk," he said.

From the morning hours until late noon, he said, two or three people can harvest 200 to 250 kg of fresh chili. Following a brief lunch break, women in each family diligently sort and pack the vegetables into uniform plastic bags. "It's essential to pack the peppers neatly," Zhao said. "Each bag holds about 25 kg of peppers, currently priced at 5.4 yuan per kg. At the season's onset, prices soared to as high as 8 yuan per kg."

As evening descends, traders arrive in trucks along the road, purchasing the villagers' yields one household at a time. As a result, a day's worth of strenuous effort yields a family an income of more than 1,000 yuan.

However, he said, the prices plummeted to a mere 1 yuan per kg the previous year. "The drastic drop in prices led to a situation where the villagers were hesitant to even

harvest the peppers," he said.

Despite the village's per capita income surging from a meager 9,000 yuan in 2018 to over 17,000 yuan last year, Guo said, the income from working in cities continues to surpass that from agricultural activities. This discrepancy persists due to the volatile nature of agricultural product prices.

Zhao said the bank has extended loans exceeding 100 million yuan to enterprises in Ebian, contributed over 1 million yuan to rural initiatives in the county, and purchased agricultural products totaling 3.7 million yuan from the county since 2021.

However, to make young people stay in the village, he said, they still need to explore alternative ways for sustainable community development beyond agriculture. "It's truly the biggest challenge we have faced since our arrival," he said.

They tried rural tourism at the village and suggested Guo turn his mother's new house, a three-story building beside his house, into a homestay with a dozen guest rooms. Earlier this month it received its first group of customers. "They came to enjoy the cooler air in the mountains," Zhao said.

A stone stairway constructed on the mountainside links the county seat with the village. Zhao said that the bank is planning to build a cultural plaza and scenic lookout for the village to help it attract visitors. As a result, he is thinking of staying in the village for two more years after his official term ends next year.

Sino-Uzbek higher education cooperation set to improve agricultural efficiency

By QIN FENG in Xi'an
and PENG CHAO

The newly established Tashkent branch of Northwest A&F University started enrolling students from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries in September, the university said.

The branch campus, the first of its kind among Chinese universities, was inaugurated at the Tashkent State Agrarian University in Uzbekistan in early July.

Minister of Education Huai Jimpeng said he expects the branch of NWAUFU in the Uzbek capital to further promote in-depth cooperation between the two countries' institutions of higher education. He urged the branch campus to

create a high-level Sino-Uzbek cooperative education brand based on talent cultivation and expand the scope of industry-university research application cooperation by focusing on the integration of industry and education.

Although NWAUFU has started enrolling students, the list of students will not be confirmed until mid-October, according to Zou Yufeng, deputy director of the Office of International Cooperation and Exchange at NWAUFU.

Wu Pute, president of NWAUFU, said the branch campus launched its first batch of master's degree programs in three majors — animal husbandry, horticultural science and agricultural management — this month through joint efforts

with Tashkent State Agrarian University. Under each program, 10 to 15 students will be admitted annually for the two-year course.

The students will study in Uzbekistan in the first year and then go to NWAUFU for their second year. "NWAUFU will provide core faculty and curriculum to support the development of the branch campus," he said.

Wu also said that the two sides will work together to develop digital agriculture courses, to narrow the gap in agricultural education resources and improve agricultural education quality in both countries.

Zou, from the NWAUFU international cooperation and exchange office, said the digital agriculture courses will integrate high-tech

technologies including the internet of things, water and fertilizer automation, image acquisition and processing, and crop growth modeling, with basic disciplines such as agronomy, ecology and soil science. The courses will realize real-time monitoring of agricultural production processes and dynamic information collection on crop growth and development, pest and disease status, water and fertilizer conditions, he said.

"By integrating agricultural big data and crop growth models to conduct digital simulation of agricultural phenomena and processes, we can utilize agricultural resources in a more scientific and efficient manner, and increase crop yield and quality," he added.

Zou said the digital courses will include field practice at an agricultural technology demonstration park focusing on water-saving built by NWAUFU in Tashkent to help the country cultivate innovative and applied talents in water-saving agriculture.

During field practice at the demonstration park, professor Zhu Delan and her team from NWAUFU have gained significant knowledge about overcoming the water scarcity issue, which is a major factor limiting agricultural development in Uzbekistan, by using an integrated and automated intelligent water and fertilizer irrigation system.

Thanks to the new system, crop yields in the park have increased by 30 percent, while water usage has

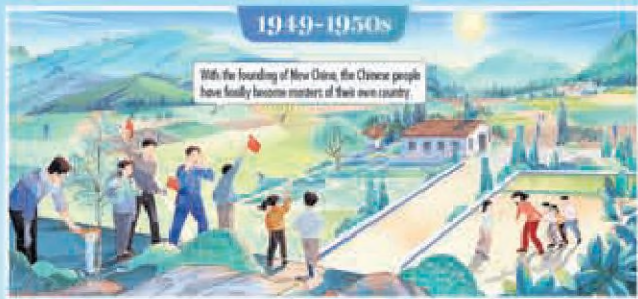
been reduced by half and costs cut by 40 percent, according to the university. Zou said the university has established six overseas agricultural technology demonstration parks in partnership with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

"These parks focus on research fields such as crop breeding, water-saving irrigation, animal husbandry and veterinary services, saline-alkali land improvement and utilization, and food processing," he said.

The university has also established a talent cultivation base in Kazakhstan and a training base in Uzbekistan, Zou added.

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VISUAL



Editor's note: This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and to celebrate, we have created a series of illustrations comparing New China's journey to the growth of a mighty tree. Over the decades, this tree has witnessed countless important milestones, symbolizing the nation's resilience and progress.



NEW CHINA'S 75-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH THE EYES OF A TREE

By YAO YUXIN
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In 1949, as the first seeds of New China were planted, a group of villagers gathered around a small sapling to celebrate the birth of the nation. Children played under its branches, and a farmer watered the sapling, a fitting image for hope for a brighter future.

As the years passed, the tree grew, witnessing pivotal moments that shaped the country: the success of the launch of China's first satellite in 1970, the resumption of university entrance exams in 1977 and the reforms and opening-up since 1978 that opened the door to prosperity. The scientific advancements and social transformations were the leaves and branches of this tree that fortified the nation.

By the 1990s, the



Augmented Reality Experience

Step 1: Scan the QR code to enter AR interaction (please turn on your camera).
Step 2: Scan the tree above to start your AR journey.

tree had become strong and robust, its branches wide and welcoming. As modern appliances like televisions and refrigerators became household staples, and skyscrapers rose on the horizon, the tree stood firm, watching over China's continued

development. The return of Hong Kong to the motherland in 1997 greatly revitalized the nation.

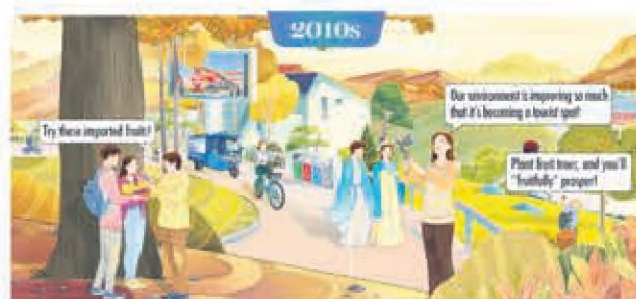
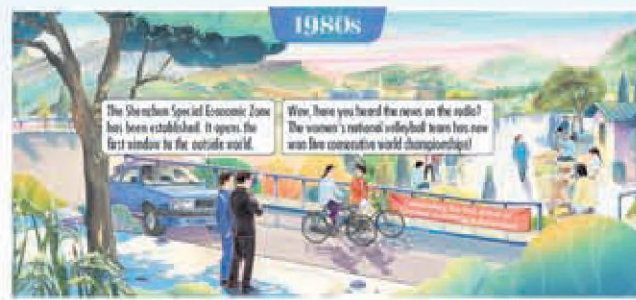
As the tree grew, so did the strength of the nation. China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 reflected its integration into the global economy. The Beijing Olympics in 2008 were a moment of national pride, driving worldwide attention to the country's achievements, while at home, infrastructure and technology boomed. The tree's growth paralleled China's urbanization, as

cranes dotted the horizon and new buildings rose across the country.

In the 2010s, the tree grew even taller, surrounded by more trees, symbolizing China's increasing focus on environmental sustainability. Green policy ensured that the tree, like China itself, would continue to grow and flourish. The Belt and Road Initiative brought new global partnerships, further expanding the country's influence across borders.

As the tree's branches housed birds and squirrels, the nation reached new heights of prosperity. By 2020, China had eradicated absolute poverty, a landmark achievement that benefited millions. Fast growing numbers of electric vehicles run on the road and the C919 airplane flies overhead, marking China's cutting-edge technology and dedication to sustainability. The nation's digital transformation and innovation further energized the country, adding new vibrancy to the tree's branches.

Today, the tree stands tall, deeply rooted in the rich soil of its history, growing ever stronger. As China continues to innovate and thrive, its people — like the branches and leaves — move forward with strength and unity, shaping a hopeful future. Like this enduring tree, New China's journey of 75 years showcases its resilience, growth and unwavering progress toward an even brighter tomorrow.



"Governing a country is like planting a tree. If the roots are firm, the branches and leaves flourish."



WORLDUS

US blamed for crises in Gaza and Lebanon

Washington criticized for backing Israel as Arab countries call for reform of UN

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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The hegemony of the United States and its allies has been criticized for undermining the UN system, which has failed to hold Israel accountable for the humanitarian crises in Gaza and, most recently, Lebanon.

Meanwhile, analysts emphasized Arab countries' call for reform of the world body during this week's high-level General Assembly meeting in New York.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the emir of Qatar whose country is a mediator in the Gaza cease-fire negotiations, condemned the "blatant aggression" against Palestinians in Gaza, labeling it the "most barbaric, heinous and extensive" breach of human values and international norms.

"With all that has taken place and continues to take place, it is no longer tenable to speak of Israel's right to defend itself in this context without being complicit in justifying the crime," Al Thani said.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said on Wednesday that at least 41,495 people have been killed in the Israel-Palestine conflict, now in its 12th month.

The toll includes 28 deaths in the previous 24 hours, according to the ministry.

Lebanon's Hezbollah said in a statement it had fired a missile on Wednesday morning targeting the Mossad spy agency in Tel Aviv, Israel's financial hub, "in support of our steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip ... and in defense of Lebanon and its people."

Warning sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and elsewhere in central Israel but there were no reports of damage or casualties.

The Israeli military has mounted its heaviest airstrikes in a year of conflict this week, targeting Hezbollah leaders and hitting hundreds of sites deep inside Lebanon while Hezbollah has fired barrages of rockets into Israel.

There was no lull on Wednesday. Israel said its warplanes were carrying out extensive strikes in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, a Hezbollah stronghold.

Meeting challenges

Addressing the UN ahead of the 79th General Assembly on Monday, Algeria's Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf said the UN must reform to meet the challenges facing the world, Arab News reported.

The current "imbalance" between member states is a source of "very serious tension, upheaval, all of which are thwarting international relations," he said.

"We believe that the organization requires reform, reform that would ensure continuity but also that the organization adapts to rise to the challenges and requirements of this

era," he said. "Such reform would restore the organization to its vital role as the beating heart of international diplomacy and multilateral action."

Dina Yulianti Sulaeman, director of the Indonesia Center for Middle East Studies, told China Daily that the "increasingly open statements" of several Arab leaders condemning Israeli violence in Palestine show that they feel they can no longer remain silent "as they have been."

The US has always sided with Israel and thwarted many international efforts to stop the violence, she said. This US attitude "is the biggest obstacle to creating peace in the Middle East," she added.

Umer Karim, an associate fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said the deadlock at the Security Council is probably the reason why Arab countries are pushing for the reforms and, in particular, the support provided by the US to Israel that has allowed the latter to continue its military operations in Gaza and Lebanon.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan slammed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for dragging the Middle East region deeper into war, Al Jazeera reported. He appealed to the international community to stop Netanyahu "and his murder network."

'No effective pressure'

George Gerapetritis, foreign minister of Greece, told Reuters that it seemed there was no effective pressure upon Israel.

"We have not prevented the spillover, and the more dispersed the war becomes, the more the situation becomes more complicated to be solved," he said, adding that Lebanon "could easily be a zone of tremendous hostility, and this is something that we cannot deal with."

Greece, which was elected as a member of the Security Council from 2025 to 2026 earlier this year, believes its historical ties with the Arabs and Israel make it credible to act as a peace broker.

On Tuesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wrote on X, "The situation in Gaza is a nonstop nightmare that threatens to take the entire region with it."

Lebanon is "at the brink," he added, and the world "cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza."

"The international community must mobilize an immediate ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and the beginning of an irreversible process toward a two-State solution," he said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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Performers from Yunnan showcase traditional song and dance at *A Many-Splendored Life* event in Los Angeles on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xi's message of appreciation conveyed at Flying Tigers event

By RENALI in Los Angeles
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Participants in a seminar on Flying Tigers culture on Wednesday got to hear a message of appreciation from President Xi Jinping.

The message was conveyed by Chinese Ambassador to United States Xie Feng. It was read by the host of the seminar, which was organized at Cal Poly Pomona university by Yunnan province representatives.

Calloway expressed her gratitude for Xi's message.

"We are continuing to teach this important piece of history so that we can build on it for the future of our country," she told China Daily.

Calloway recounted how her grandfather, General Chennault, first went to China in 1937, years before the Flying Tigers were formed.

"My grandfather stayed in China from 1937 to 1941, when he saw the atrocities that the Japanese were committing on the Chinese people," Calloway recalled. "He came home to talk to President Franklin Roosevelt and to send aid to China, and he was successful in talking Roosevelt into allowing him and his men to recruit pilots and support group of 300 to come over to aid China."

For many in Yunnan, the Flying Tigers represent their earliest impression of America, according to Wang Wei, deputy director-general of Yunnan's foreign affairs office. "During World War II, for them,

the 1st American Volunteer Group, was formed in 1941. Two of the squadrons were based in Kunming of Yunnan province. The deep-rooted connection between Yunnan and the pilots has been memorialized through the restoration of numerous historical sites, including the Kunming Flying Tigers Museum and the Hump Monument.

Calloway expressed her gratitude for Xi's message.

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For many in Yunnan, the Flying Tigers represent their earliest impression of America, according to Wang Wei, deputy director-general of Yunnan's foreign affairs office. "During World War II, for them,

the Flying Tigers were America," Wang said at the seminar.

New technologies, such as online databases and virtual museums, have helped spread the stories to a global audience.

Calloway, who serves as the director of the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum, has made several trips to Kunming, capital of Yunnan, including a visit last year.

"I opened the exhibit in the Kunming Museum 12 years ago, and they've done an amazing job expanding it," she said.

The seminar also featured a photo exhibition featuring stories of bravery and sacrifice by the Flying Tigers and the people of Yunnan.

Lieutenant Robert Mooney — who sacrificed his life protecting the people of Xiangyun — and the villagers of Lanping — who built an airstrip by hand to rescue an American pilot — were two examples of the camaraderie shared by the two countries.

"The spirit of Flying Tigers symbolizes bravery and sacrifice, justice and peace, cooperation and friendship," Wang said. "These stories are a microcosm of companionship in adversity between the two peoples and their common efforts for peace, illustrating the friendship that stood the test of the war."

California sues Exxon over plastic dumping

By MAY ZHOU in New York
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California filed a lawsuit against Exxon Mobil on Monday, alleging the oil giant "caused or substantially contributed to the deluge of plastic pollution" that has harmed and continues to harm the state's environment and population.

The lawsuit also accused Exxon of deceiving the public by falsely promising to recycle the plastics knowing that only a tiny fraction of plastic waste it produced could be recycled.

The lawsuit was filed in state Superior Court in San Francisco by California Attorney General Rob Bonta. He said a few nonprofit environmental organizations have filed a similar lawsuit against Exxon.

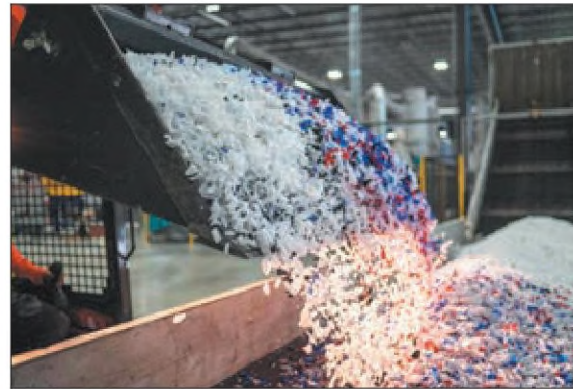
Bonta said the state is not seeking damages but rather remedies, including an abatement fund of "a likelihood into the tune of billions of dollars." The money would be used for reeducation and research and development for successful plastic recycling and cleaning up plastic pollution.

Exxon Mobil was ranked 12th on the 2023 Fortune Global 500 list of the world's largest companies by revenue.

A study by Australian nonprofit Minderop in 2021 called the company the largest producer of single-use plastics in the world.

The California lawsuit alleges that Exxon "deceptively promoted recycling as a cure-all for plastic waste" while knowing "it is extremely costly and difficult to eradicate" the plastic waste and knew that plastic predictably disintegrates into microplastics that pose an even greater harm to "all living things, including human bodies."

"For decades, Exxon Mobil has



Plastic is loaded onto a conveyor belt at Exxon Mobil's chemical recycling plant in Baytown, Texas, in October. SERGIO FLORES / AFP

been deceiving the public to convince us that plastic recycling could solve the plastic waste and pollution crisis when they clearly knew this wasn't possible," Bonta said in a news release.

"Exxon Mobil lied to further its record-breaking profits at the expense of our planet and possibly jeopardizing our health."

Misleading labeling
Exxon falsely promoted all plastics as recyclable, when less than 1 percent was recycled because plastic recycling was not technically or economically practicable, he said.

It labeled its plastics containing less than 1 percent recycled material through its "advanced recycling" process as recycled. That misled consumers to purchase and use more single-use plastics than they would otherwise, he said.

In an emailed statement, Exxon Mobil argued it has processed more than 27,000 metric tons of plastic waste into usable raw materials, keeping it out of landfills through

its advanced recycling, Reuters reported.

"Instead of suing us, they could have worked with us to fix the problem and keep plastic out of landfills," said Lauren Kight, an Exxon spokesperson.

Bonta said at a news conference on Monday that overall, only 5 percent of plastics are recycled and "at least 95 percent of them, broadly speaking, were being incinerated or put into our oceans or our rivers or waterways or into landfills."

He predicted the case is likely to take two to three years to conclude and he is confident the state will win.

"While these may be the first cases of their kind, my personal view is I hope that they won't be the last," Bonta said.

"Others, other states who have been harmed by Exxon Mobil — and there are other states who have been harmed by Exxon Mobil — should respectfully consider bringing their own lawsuit and fighting to hold Exxon Mobil accountable on behalf of their state or their public entity."

Innovation hub boosts businesses in New York Chinatown

By BELINDA ROBINSON
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Small businesses in Manhattan Chinatown are the focus of a help center created by a nonprofit organization, which wants to ensure that stores in the iconic area thrive for generations to come.

"Welcome to Chinatown," the Small Business Innovation Hub at 115 Bowery, opened in mid-September and aims to "accelerate existing businesses and incubate new ones."

Victoria Lee, CEO of Welcome to Chinatown, told China Daily: "The hub plays a vital role in Chinatown's ecosystem while bridging tradition with innovation. It's not just a space — it's a support system where long-standing businesses can modernize, and new entrepreneurs can get the resources they need to succeed. This ensures the community remains vibrant and competitive in today's economy."

Founded in 2020, amid the challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, Welcome to Chinatown has evolved into a champion for local people and businesses in Lower Manhattan.

It estimates that small businesses represent 98 percent of Manhattan Chinatown's economy, and around 94 percent have fewer than 20 employees. Until now, there hasn't been a dedicated place to offer advice, support or training.

New York elected officials and businesses such as Amazon New York already have given the initiative their support.

Mark Levine, Manhattan borough president, said in a statement: "My office is proud to have given the hub \$130,000 so that it could become this type of entrepreneurial and community anchor."

State Senator Brian Kavanagh, who represents Chinatown, said his office had provided capital funding toward renovation of the hub's space.

"I am confident that this new hub will help unleash the boundless potential of this community's small businesses and unite all of us around a vision for a vibrant and thriving Chinatown," he said in a statement.

State Assembly member Grace Lee said in a statement: "Investing in local businesses is critical to preserving the cultural and economic vitality of Chinatown."

The United States is home to more than 33.2 million small businesses, responsible for creating 17.3 million net new jobs between 1995 and 2021, according to the US Small Business Administration's advocacy office.

Asian Americans own more than 2.9 million businesses in the country, employing over 3.5 million workers, according to US Census Bureau data.

An estimated 4,000 businesses in Manhattan Chinatown are Asian owned, according to data from the Asian American Foundation.

The area has undergone immense change in the past few years, and some businesses have had to shut their doors after decades.

Others experienced fallout from the pandemic, which led to a 26 percent decrease in jobs in the neighborhood, according to a 2022 study by Welcome to Chinatown.

Ting's Gift Shop, a family-run novelty shop that was on Doyers Street, shut its doors in May after 66 years in business selling everything from jewelry to pajamas.

Manhattan Chinatown was formed in the 1870s primarily by immigrants from the Toisan (now Taishan) region in South China's Guangdong province, according to a New York City report.

Some of the early Asian immigrants had arrived to build railroads but soon saw work dry up. In the face of discrimination and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, they banded together to become self-sufficient.

In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act allowed for more immigration. By the 1980s, immigrants from Hong Kong, Fuzhou, and other parts of China and Vietnam launched new businesses in Manhattan.

While New York's Chinatown once was only three blocks, it now covers more than 55 square blocks.

ACROSS ASIA



Food delivery and transport services via the Grab digital portal.

PLATFORM for PROTECTION

Singapore passes landmark Bill recognizing ride-hail, delivery gig workers as distinct labor class

Editor's note: In this weekly feature *China Daily* gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which *China Daily* is among its 20 leading titles.

Cabbies, private-hire drivers and freelance delivery workers who rely on online matching platforms for income will get better labor protection from Jan 1, 2025, after the Parliament of Singapore passed a landmark Bill on Sept 10 designating them as a distinct legal category in between employees and the self-employed.

Known collectively as platform workers, this 70,500-strong group will get greater levels of contributions to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) savings scheme, aligned with what employees and employers pay today.

Platform operators will also have to provide them with standardized work injury compensation insurance policies with the same level of coverage as employees.

In addition, platform workers, who cannot unionize under current laws, will be able to form representative bodies called platform work associations, with legal powers similar to those of trade unions.

This will allow them to negotiate and sign legally binding collective agreements with operators, and gain access to various avenues of redress, including the right to strike if the decision is considered and justified.

The culmination of a three-year process with this, the Platform Workers Bill received support from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

Over two days, 26 members of Parliament, or MPs, spoke in support of the law but raised a range of issues, with implementation details and the higher costs that will result from the stronger protection among key concerns.

Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Manpower Koh Poh Koon said Singapore is among the first in the world to provide statutory protection for platform workers as a distinct group.

Many other countries are grappling with this, given the heterogeneous and rapidly evolving nature of the sector, he noted.

Cost management

Pointing to the complexity of implementing the new platform workers law, Koh said the policy solutions may not be perfect.

"We will have to make trade-offs and accept that not all issues and gaps in the platform space can be fully addressed through this legislation alone," he said.

Illustrating these trade-offs, Koh noted how MPs had expressed concerns about the higher costs arising from the new law, but at the same time called for more protection that would drive up costs further.

"I raise this observation to make the point that where we have landed at this Bill today is a careful balance of the interests of the various stakeholders involved," he said.

Koh said there are measures in the law that prevent operators from passing on costs to workers. Market competition is also an important self-regulating force, as



Delivery riders of technology company Grab's GrabFood platform in Singapore in 2022. The company offers a major app for ride-hailing, food delivery and digital payment services on mobile devices. PHOTOS BY BRYAN VAN DER BEEK VIA GETTY IMAGES

“Together, we have crafted a solution that benefits both workers and businesses, ensuring fair treatment while preserving the flexibility that gig work offers. It's another meaningful step forward in our ongoing efforts to renew and strengthen our social compact.”

Lawrence Wong,
Singapore's prime minister

70,500 platform workers

will get greater levels of contributions to the Central Provident Fund savings scheme, aligned with what employees and employers pay today in Singapore.

workers and consumers have the choice to switch platforms, he said.

He noted that added costs incurred by platform operators on work injury compensation and CPF can also be audited to counter any claims of profiteering.

"Platform operators will need to consider how best to manage the costs. Consumers, too, will have a role to play," he said, noting that the higher costs arising from the protection of platform workers are no different from the business costs that employers already incur.

"It is a leveling up of what platform operators ought to have been paying ... It will also ensure a level playing field for companies operating in Singapore to compete fairly in terms of business costs," Koh said.

He warned platform operators against reflecting and charging these added business costs through a separate fee component, calling it "disingenuous". "Such a move would be tantamount to passing the costs directly to customers," he added.

Koh noted how MPs like Gan Thiam Poh had asked if the government would consider reducing the phase-in period for higher CPF contributions.

While Koh said he shared the sentiment that CPF contributions are very important, he noted that the five-year transition period was a careful decision made after considering the impact on take-home pay for workers, the cost impact on platforms, and how these costs may be passed on to consumers.

The five-year period will moderate the impact on various stakeholders and give the market time to adjust, he added.

Similarly, he said allowing older platform workers to opt in for the new CPF scheme reduces the administrative burden on platform operators and workers, compared with an opt-out system.

"It's not just one operator that has to make system changes, or (bear) administrative costs. All the apps that this person has signed up with, even if it's an app that he uses very infrequently, would have to, then, also reflect that same CPF opt-in or opt-out status," Koh later said.

Fair treatment

On suggestions by MPs to police or audit platform algorithms to weed out any discriminatory practices, Koh said the dynamic nature of these algorithms means any audit will be reactive and have limited utility.

He said forcing platforms to reveal proprietary information like how their algorithms work may drive them away from Singapore and lead to a loss of platform worker jobs. Regulating the use of such algorithms will also impose significant compliance costs and deter potential entrants.

Instead, the new union-like platform work associations will be empowered to take up issues such as discrimination with the relevant operators, he said.

He added that it is also in the interest of platform operators to treat workers fairly, since all younger platform workers will be required to make higher CPF contributions over time, and those who feel they are being treated unfairly can switch platforms.

On work injury compensation, Koh turned down a suggestion to set up a centralized insurance system to minimize disputes, saying an open and competitive insurance market will facilitate sustainable insurance premiums.

He said these premiums will account for the risks in the respective sectors, and be based on indicators such as payroll size and number of workers.

The current estimate by insurers is that premiums for platform work injury insurance will not be much higher than those for employees in the same sector, he added.

"Today, there's no actuarial data, so everyone is pricing a little bit more conservatively ... I think we should probably give the market some time to come to equilibrium," he said.

On suggestions to regulate working hours and incentive structures, or impose minimum earnings, Koh said being too heavy-handed with regulation could stifle the innovation and sustainability of the platform economy.

"Instead of the blunt tool of regulation, it is better to focus on the outcomes, and empower stakeholders to negotiate for their interests," he added.

In an online post, Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said the landmark Bill is the result of Singapore's strong tripartite partnership involving unions, employers and the government.

"Together, we have crafted a solution that benefits both workers and businesses, ensuring fair treatment while preserving the flexibility that gig work offers. It's another meaningful step forward in our ongoing efforts to renew and strengthen our social compact," he said.

Looking ahead

Koh said that when the platform workers law comes into force on Jan 1, 2025, it will supersede any existing platform work agreements. He also assured the House that the scope of the new law will be reviewed in future to potentially cover other platform services, beyond ride-hailing and delivery.

MPs like Louis Ng had pointed to the growing number of freelancers who use online matching platforms to provide services such as domestic cleaning and caregiving.

Nominated MP Ong Hua Han cited locum nurses as an example of freelancers who are also subject to the management control of caregiving platforms.

Koh said the government will consider taking a similar phased approach and providing transitional support if new sectors are added to the law.

In response to Arts Nominated MP Usha Chandradas, who flagged the vulnerability of freelancers in the arts community, Koh said the government will consider how this group may be better supported too.

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Soccer fans oppose Seoul stadium's K-pop acts

From Madison Square Garden in New York to Wembley Stadium in London, the biggest sports arenas and stadiums in major cities often double as concert venues.

But holding concerts at the Seoul World Cup Stadium is being challenged by some soccer fans complaining that nonsports events there have crucial detrimental effects on the field.

A self-proclaimed fan of soccer player Son Heung-min on Sept 11 posted a petition on the state-run e-People website, calling for the cancellation of K-pop superstar IU's concert slated for Sept 21-22 at the Seoul World Cup Stadium.

The petitioner claimed that the large crowd expected for the concert — which sold out 100,000 tickets within minutes — will damage the grass of the stadium that will be used for the qualifying matches of the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup.

After playing Palestine on its home field on Sept 5, South Korea will host the rest of its Group B opponents in the qualifiers slated until next year. But there have been multiple complaints from players, fans and even opposing teams about the poor conditions of the grass.

"A third-round qualifying match between South Korea and Iraq is slated in Sangam (also known as the Seoul World Cup Stadium) on Oct 15, and (the authorities) should try their best to manage the grass there for the remainder of (the World Cup qualifiers) period," the petitioner wrote.

The person cited the Seoul Metropolitan Government Ordinance on the Installation and Operation of Metropolitan Sports Facilities, which in Article 5-3 states that the mayor may bar or even cancel the use of a sports facility if an event is deemed as possibly causing a hindrance to the management of the facility in question.

Greener grass

The controversy started when South Korean team captain Son Heung-min — who led his players' 3-1 road win over Oman with a go-ahead goal in the second half — complained about the grass in the Seoul World Cup Stadium. He said the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex's field being in good condition allowed him to play with more confidence, adding that he wishes such good management could be applied to South Korea's home fields as well.

After his team ended in a goalless draw against Palestine in Seoul, he claimed the grass had made it difficult to control the ball.

The allegedly questionable grass conditions at the Seoul World Cup Stadium have long been an issue. Former South Korean team player Ki Sung-yueng in 2017 jokingly said that he was not worried about a road match in China, because the grass there "could not possibly be worse than in Seoul".

In light of the concerns over grass, Seoul Facilities Corporation in October 2021 installed new turf comprised of 95 percent natural and 5 percent synthetic grass. Fewer events were held at the stadium since then compared to before, with the venue being concert-free for a full year since the new field was installed.

But between the ongoing remodeling of the Seoul Olympic Stadium in Jamsil, southern Seoul, and the Gocheok Sky Dome being occupied for the professional baseball league season, the Seoul World Cup Stadium has become virtually the only venue in Seoul to hold mega-sized concerts. The concerts of band Seventeen and singer Lim Young-woong were held in the stadium, each in April and May of this year, before the recent concert.

Operators of the Seoul World Cup Stadium told local media that warnings about the grass are notified to whoever rents the stadium, and those who rent it are mandated to restore any damages to the field. Grass access is also limited to the minimum number of personnel required to install the stage and conduct the events, they added.

The performers themselves also make efforts to minimize damage to the grass, such as Lim not installing seats on the field. IU's agency also vowed to follow the policies by protecting the grass, disassembling the stage as soon as the concert ends while keeping the grass hydrated and well-ventilated during the event.

THE KOREA HERALD, SOUTH KOREA



The K-pop Super Live concert at the Seoul World Cup Stadium on Aug 11, 2023. NEWS1

一城 CITY TALES 一街

Editor's Note: An array of Chinese cities have maintained their cultural memories in the form of historical neighborhoods that have only added to their multilayered charm and vigor with the passage of time. China Daily is taking readers on a journey to some of these timeless areas, where President Xi Jinping has left his footsteps and remarked on the preservation and vitalization of heritage. In this installment, we take a walk through Pingyao Ancient City in Shanxi province to see the charm of a well-preserved walled city.

A CHANCE TO TRAVEL BACK IN TIME TODAY

Highlighting its many charms, the ancient city welcomes guests while meeting challenges of preservation and sustainability, **Yang Yang** and **Zhu Xingxin** report in Pingyao, Shanxi.



A bird's-eye view of Pingyao Ancient City in Shanxi province. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Three decades ago, Gong Li, a college student who grew up in Pingyao Ancient City in Shanxi province, invited one of her classmates to visit her hometown.

It was evening when they were picked up by her brother-in-law at the old railway station located outside the city. The two sat in a motorcycle sidecar, winding through dimly lit old streets and passing a few closed shops that sold daily goods and services such as smoked meat or ironware.

"My classmate said it was quite scary as if through the ancient gate, we had traveled back many years," says Gong, 48, deputy head of Pingyao's cultural center. Hailed as the best-preserved ancient city inhabited by ethnic Han people, dating back more than 2,800 years, Pingyao Ancient City is an incarnation of historical memories passed down from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. It houses about 4,000 traditional residences from Ming and Qing, showcasing the evolution and layout of a traditional Han city.

At age 6, Gong moved with her family to the ancient city, living in a quiet alley close to the busy South Street until getting married. In her memories, everyone knew each other around the neighborhood; children played on the ancient walls; sometimes, she got lost in the maze-like alleys.

Pingyao has 72 major streets, eight minor streets and 72 alleys that, resembling the feet of a house centipede, are vividly called "house-centipede alleys". "What's particularly interesting about Pingyao is that all the alleys intersect like lines on a checkersboard. Wherever you go, just walk ahead along one alley, and you will ultimately reach a major street and find your way back," she says.

But now everything has changed. To better preserve the city, the schools, hospitals, governmental organs and many residents have left.

"It's more convenient to live outside, especially for young people who prefer living in well-equipped buildings," she says.

As many traditional courtyards have been transformed for commercial purposes, like in many other ancient cities in China, the streets of Pingyao are packed with various businesses ranging from ubiquitous photo-shoot tours, restaurants, guesthouses, local specialty shops selling items like time-honored braised beef and aged vinegar and Pingyao hand-polished lacquerware to shops selling snacks such as cakes, milk tea, cultural creative products and handmade soaps.

But Gong prefers a nostalgic lifestyle, an ancient city that breathes when more people live in those courtyards with modern facilities.

"When you stroll in the alleys, you can see cats lying in the sunshine, elderly people sitting against the walls and chatting, and people playing chess or poker or drinking tea. That's what

brings the ancient city to life," she says. In 1997, Pingyao was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List as the only survivor of its kind throughout the vicissitudes of history, which has brought many tourists from all over the world.

On a Wednesday in early September, Bai Yonghong, the 59-year-old owner of the Harmony Hotel on West Street, received 38 guests from Spain. As one of the most popular hotels among foreign tourists, 80 percent of its guests came from overseas before the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the nights, sheltered by a 500-year-old Chinese scholar tree 131 meters tall, people from different countries gather in the three yards that connect, drinking beer and talking. Bai sits among them, ready to serve, while trying to figure out what they are saying. That is how she picked up languages such as English, French and Spanish.

"Foreign visitors like Pingyao for its authentic ancient Chinese charm," she says. About 10 years ago, Bai purchased the residence with three courtyards once belonging to a family in the Qing Dynasty and transformed them into a hotel. Each courtyard is enclosed by two-story buildings made of mainly bricks and wood, decorated with exquisite "three carvings" that characterize the residences of wealthy families in the old times — wood, stone and brick carvings.

On top of the roofs, a cute miniature house sits in the middle, a decoration that can be seen on many roofs in Pingyao.

"It's a feng shui building (a building for auspicious purposes)," Bai says. Unlike many ancient buildings in other areas, the traditional residences in Pingyao have taller outer walls and one-sided sloping roofs that tilt toward the yards. Sitting on the east of the Loess Plateau, Pingyao is windy and dry with little rainfall.

In a courtyard enclosed by houses on four sides, one-sided sloping roofs gather precious rainwater into the yard, while the four taller outer walls shield from the

wind and cold. Since water is synonymous with wealth in China, traditional residential structures in Pingyao "gather both energy and wealth".

A common city in ancient times, the biggest value of Pingyao lies in that it is the only ancient walled city inhabited by ethnic Han people that was preserved in its entirety,

says Li Jinsheng, 62, a former first-level inspector of the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Shanxi Province. A native of the ancient city, Li was among the experts who planned the first blueprints to preserve and restore this cultural heritage in the 1980s.

Evolving over hundreds of years, the streets of Pingyao form a pattern in the shape of the Chinese character *tu* (earth).

In ancient Chinese people's beliefs, the earth generates gold in a symbolic sense, which has become one of the explanations why Pingyao was home to many tycoons, especially during the late Qing Dynasty. "Whether it's the city's turtle-shaped contour or the *tu*-shaped street pattern, they are essentially people's blessings to the city for its longevity and prosperity," Li says.

Pingyao Ancient City showcases the traditional philosophy about a Han city: a photo in the middle, which commemorates the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) general Guan Yu; the City God Temple on the left and the ancient government office on the right; and Taoist temples on the left and Buddhist temples on the right.

With a maximum reception capacity of 113,000 people per day, Pingyao Ancient City is seeing its busiest time of the year. Following the three-day Mid-Autumn Festival holiday is the 24th China Pingyao International Photography Festival that closed on Monday with photographers and shutterbugs flocking in from all over the world.

Tuesday saw the opening ceremony of the eighth Pingyao International Film Festival which gathers many filmmakers, stars and moviegoers.

During the Spring Festival and May Day holidays, Pingyao received about 80,000 tourists per day. For the upcoming National Day holiday, it expects more visitors largely thanks to the video game *Black Myth: Wukong*.

The game, launched internationally on Aug 20 by Chinese developer Game Science, has gone viral online. It features temples, statues of gods and Buddhas based on real ones in Shanxi, a province preserving the most ancient pagodas and temples in China, intriguing many people to visit those historical buildings, including the Shuanglin Temple and Zhenguo Temple not far from the ancient city of Pingyao.

Booming tourism has brought not only wealth but also challenges in how to better preserve the ancient city for its historical and cultural significance and for the residents to live a better life so that it can live on.

"Overall, the environment in Pingyao is getting better and businesses are good for the residents' lives," Gong says. But she hopes for a warmer atmosphere composed of antique streets, elderly people, tea-drinking, Chinese chess-playing, and pets, facilitated by modern infrastructure.

"Pingyao is a village with less homogenized commercial activities." During his trip to Pingyao Ancient City in January 2022, President Xi Jinping called for more efforts to conserve the country's cultural heritage and protect "the valuable treasure left to us by our ancestors".

For urban planners like Li, the management of the ancient city is becoming more complicated and challenging since "it is a residential district, a preserved cultural heritage site and also a tourist attraction", he says.

"But ultimately, Pingyao is an ancient city where people reside. We shouldn't turn it into an uninhabited tourist spot; there should always be residents," Li says. "The regulations for preserving Pingyao Ancient City explicitly emphasize the importance of safeguarding the daily lives of the residents."

Over the past decades, efforts have been made not only to preserve the cultural heritage of Pingyao Ancient City but also to develop it sustainably. "We can see the ancient city has been doing well. The key is to continuously improve the living environment and preserve and restore old houses while continuing to develop emerging industries, especially cultural creative industries, such as those regarding photography and film, for example," Li says.

"Our goal is to breathe new life into this ancient city, to continue its history and to pass on its culture."

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Clockwise from top left: Visitors enjoy a night stroll at Pingyao Ancient City in Shanxi on Sept. 19. The City God Temple of Pingyao with glazed tiles. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY. Hand-polished lacquerware is a specialty of Pingyao. BAIYING / FOR CHINA DAILY. A bird's-eye view of the ancient city. The 24th China Pingyao International Photography Festival attracts visitors. The owner of a lacquerware shop Wang Huirong (left) introduces his products. Foreigners tour the ancient city on Sept. 3. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Wall restoration based on tradition and experience

By YANG YANG and ZHU XINGXIN in Pingyao, Shanxi

One of the most outstanding treasures of the best-preserved ancient walled city in China — Pingyao Ancient City in Pingyao county, North China's Shanxi province — is the wall itself.

Shao Shuai, 41, still remembers an afternoon in 2012 shortly after he joined a company specializing in restoring ancient architecture in the county.

It was about 4 pm. A heavy rain had washed soil from the wall onto the road. Shao and his colleagues were busy shoveling the soil and cleaning the road. The wall, first built about 2,800 years ago, was rebuilt and expanded in 1370 using the old-fashioned method of rammed earth inside and gray bricks on the outside. Over the following 500 years in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, the wall had been repaired 26 times, historical records show. Now standing 12 meters tall, it is 6.4 kilometers in perimeter and, on average, five meters wide.

At Point No 77, Shao and his colleagues found more soil had washed away. Without enough experience, they did not notice much difference in the wall, so they removed the soil and moved on. Walking about 60 meters away, they heard a loud noise — the wall had collapsed. About 120 metric tons of soil had slid, leaving a 16-meter-long gap in the wall.

Since then, the county bureau of cultural relics organized teams to inspect the walls each year to find potential dangers and restore the wall one section after another. Shao is one of the restorers.

In October 2021, heavy rain hit Pingyao again, causing the wall to collapse in 61 places.

"The rain lasted too long — nonstop for three days and nights — and the rammed soil inside drew too much water. The proportion of water reached 20 to 25 percent," he says.

"Experts from the National Cultural Heritage Administration decided after examination that it was caused by a natural disaster," he adds.

"But the parts we restored over the past decade, mostly on the east side of the wall, stayed in good condition, surviving the flood," he adds.

Already an experienced restorer of the city wall, Shao said in a previous interview that the restoration was very challenging because it was hard to tell the situation inside the wall judging from its surface.

To reinforce the wall and restore its original shape and structure, Shao and his team adopted traditional techniques passed down from the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

In addition, applying stricter standards for the rammed earth's ingredients and processing method, they further consolidated the top of the wall to reduce permeability.

At Shao's supervision, by November 2022, the restoration project was complete. After carefully examining the project, Wang Guohe, 75, who led Shao into the world of restoring ancient architecture, said: "The preservation of the city wall is in good hands. The repair and maintenance following the disaster were well executed."

Born and raised in the ancient city, Shao used to play on the wall, capturing insects when he was little. His father is a craftsman who adorns traditional architecture with painted patterns, and crafts paper dolls that depict scenes from Chinese operas, which is a national-level intangible cultural heritage.

In 2008, Shao graduated from Sichuan Normal University with a bachelor's degree in environment design. After working in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, as an interior designer for several years, he returned to Pingyao. In 2012, he joined the company founded by Wang.

Apart from the wall, Shao has also restored other ancient buildings, such as the Fire God Temple and the Guandi Temple in the ancient city, which commemorates the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) general Guan Yu. Now he is working on another ancient Guandi Temple in one of Pingyao's remote villages.

As a project manager, he organizes bricklayers and carpenters and instructs and supervises their work.

"Before each project, I need to do a lot of research and read many books to continuously improve my knowledge and understanding of ancient architecture," Shao says. "After so many years of learning and practicing, I am not a novice anymore but a person who can communicate with ancient architecture when I stand before them, reading the information left by their builders decades or centuries ago," he says.

LIFE



Left and below: International travelers enjoy an ancient cultural street in Tianjin. **Center:** A tourist tries on Peking Opera makeup and a costume. **Right:** The Tianjin Museum attracts tourists.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Anna Bondarenko, from Russia, had a blast in Tianjin in mid-September. The woman in her 20s explored what the northern city has to offer — taking a ride on the giant Ferris wheel Tianjin Eye, which is 110 meters in diameter and equipped with 50 carriages, while experiencing traditional Chinese opera and enjoying local gourmet cuisine.

"It's breathtaking to see the city's landscape from the Ferris wheel. It's also fun interacting with the opera artists and trying the makeup," she says.

Having studied business administration in Shanghai for almost two years, Bondarenko has traveled to several places around China.

"I love traveling in China to big cities like Beijing and Shanghai and smaller destinations like Zhuzhou and Changsha (in Hunan province). I think every city has its distinctive vibes," she says.

As she shares her travels around China on popular social media platforms like Instagram and Xiaohongshu, she finds that many of her 30,000 followers are amazed by the diversity of the country's tourism resources.

"They leave comments like how Suzhou, Jiangsu province, looks like Venice while having unique characteristics," says Bondarenko.

Her family has also been fascinated by China's history and culture, coming to visit her multiple times.

"My brother has started to learn Mandarin after he visited me in Shanghai several months ago," she says.

Bondarenko is among more than 100 travel influencers from across the world who were invited to attend the Global Traveler (Tianjin) Conference in the municipality in mid-September.

The event was hosted by major domestic travel agency Trip.com Group and global travel review platform TripAdvisor, which sought to boost the country's culture and tourism industries.

The goal was to have the attendees record and share what they saw in the country and continue to fuel the "China Travel" craze, which has become a buzzword on overseas social media where an increasing number of international travelers have posted photos and videos that offer fresh perspectives of the country.

In the first half of the year, more than 14.6 million international travelers entered China through various ports, a year-on-year increase of 152.7 percent, the National Immigration Administration reports.

Among them, more than 8.5 million people entered visa-free, accounting for more than 50 percent, a year-on-year increase of 190.1 percent.

The administration predicts that foreigners' enthusiasm for coming to China will continue to rise in the second half of the year.

Miao Muyang, director of the industrial development department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, notes that the comment sections of videos posted by a large number of travel influencers about their experiences in China have been filled with viewers' excitement and interest, which have been magnified by the popularity of the recent video game *Black Myth: Wukong* featuring Chinese culture and scenic spots.

Since 2024, the country has implemented a visa-free entry policy with

Destinations of attraction

With visa-free policies and optimized measures, international travelers are flocking in greater numbers to China, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



Above left: Foreign social media influencers attend the 2024 China Culture and Tourism Industries Exposition in Tianjin in mid-September. **Above right:** Visitors watch the making of a Tianjin snack at the Global Traveler (Tianjin) Conference in the municipality.

Factbox

10 most popular Chinese cities for international tourists:

Shanghai
Beijing
Chengdu, Sichuan province
Guangzhou, Guangdong province
Tianjin
Shenzhen, Guangdong
Xi'an, Shaanxi province
Sanya, Hainan province
Hangzhou, Zhejiang province
Suzhou, Jiangsu province

TRIPADVISOR

15 countries for 15 days, expanded the 144-hour visa-free transit policy to 37 ports and 54 countries, continuously optimized payment services, and increased the number of international flights, Miao says.

"These measures facilitate the entry of foreign visitors and allow

them to experience the unique world heritage in Beijing's *hutong* (alleyways), appreciate the blend of Eastern and Western cultures on Tianjin's Wudadao (Five Great Avenues), enjoy the sparkling night views at Shanghai's Bund, and explore the rich historical culture through Shanxi's ancient architecture," Miao says.

He says the Chinese government will continue to tap into China's cultural and tourism resources and upgrade tourism products and services.

"Our goal is to create travel routes and destinations that showcase the charm of Chinese culture and are highly attractive to international tourists, increasing the supply of diverse, high-quality inbound tourism products," he adds.

More efforts will go to enhancing the comfort and satisfaction of foreign tourists in every aspect of their experiences, from dining, accommodation,

transportation, sightseeing, and shopping to entertainment, he says.

Tianjin authorities have rolled out urban routes highlighting the local lifestyle and historical architecture, as well as special scenes on street corners and near bridges.

"So far this year, we have held dozens of bridge-side concerts," says Zhu Yihai, an official with the Tianjin Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, adding that each of the more than 20 bridges over Haihe River in Tianjin is unique.

"This is something that sets us apart from other cities. Moreover, around every bridge, locals spontaneously organize various cultural activities throughout the year," he adds.

Local authorities have involved professionals and performers to take part in the bridge-side concerts, whose number is expected to reach 100 by the end of this year, according to Zhu.

Zhu notes that many inbound

cruise travelers have chosen Tianjin as the first leg of their journey in China through the Tianjin International Cruise Home Port. The city has launched many measures to facilitate their trips, such as convenient payment methods and multilingual guides.

Sun Bowen, general manager of Trip.com Group's inbound tourism, says the inbound tourism market is on a positive growth trend.

For Tianjin, the total number of inbound tourism orders in the first half of this year increased by 50.7 percent compared to the same period last year, Sun says.

The number of inbound visits through the agency during the period also grew by approximately 58.2 percent, with the total value of goods sold increasing by 32.5 percent.

Additionally, transportation orders from international travelers to the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area for the first six months surged by 69.2

percent year-on-year.

Sun considers these figures very encouraging.

"We've noticed an increase in independent travelers (across the country), who make up a larger portion of our platform's customers, which aligns with the country's visa-free policies, including the 144-hour visa-free transit policy," Sun notes.

The agency has developed pertinent products to cater to transit travelers' needs, such as a bus tour that brings people from Shanghai Pudong International Airport to downtown.

"It has been a hit among transit travelers and is frequently booked up," Sun says.

The agency plans to develop similar products in various port cities.

"We will continue to adjust our products, marketing strategies and product development to cater more to this type of tourist," he adds.

At the global traveler conference, Trip.com Group and Tianjin launched a plan that aims to continue promoting inbound tourism, such as creating exciting routes for travelers on a 144-hour visa-free transit.

Liu Xiaozhou, CEO of TripAdvisor China, said at the conference that China is becoming a global tourism hot spot, not only reflecting the appeal of its rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes to international tourists but also highlighting the country's relentless efforts and achievements in improving tourism services and optimizing the tourist environment.

Since 2022, inbound tourism in China has shown a clear and accelerated recovery, reaching 56 percent of 2019 levels in 2023.

As of the first quarter, the number of non-mainland residents entering the Chinese mainland had recovered to 92 percent of the same period in 2019, which is 2.2 times the figure for the same period in 2023, while the number of visas issued to foreigners increased by 119 percent year-on-year, Liu notes.

"These substantial increases demonstrate the international market's positive response to favorable policies and show that China's inbound tourism market is progressing rapidly toward broader horizons," Liu says.

"More international tourists show a strong interest in China's natural scenery, historical sites, modern cities, and local cultures. The story of China is being shared with the world through the personal experiences of each visitor," he says.

During her Tianjin trip, Bondarenko interacted with many other foreign travelers from places such as New Zealand and Italy.

"Everyone is excited to travel here," she says, adding that they share fun anecdotes and tips during their travels.

She plans to pursue a master's degree in social media or marketing after finishing her studies this year, which she says will give her more time to explore the country.

Bondarenko says she'd like to have an in-depth tour of Beijing to experience the culture and to visit Chengdu, Sichuan province, to see pandas.

"It's safe to travel in China and easy and comfortable to go from place to place with the well-developed transport networks, such as the high-speed rails," she says.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

COMMENT

Editorials

Muddying waters over Taiwan question can't change its status as part of China

For a long time the United States held to its stance of strategic ambiguity on the Taiwan question, officially adhering to the one-China principle, which recognizes the central government of the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China to which the island belongs, while maintaining unofficial relations with Taiwan and its long-standing commitment to the Taiwan Relations Act, which allows arms sales to the island, among other things. This has required US administrations to do a delicate balancing act to avoid direct confrontation with China.

But in recent years, particularly under the Joe Biden administration, tensions between Washington and Beijing over Taiwan have escalated due to the US giving greater support to and emboldening the island's self-admitted secessionist-minded authorities in their efforts to seek recognition for the de facto "independence" of the island.

In their latest hustle, the island's independence-seekers are attempting to hijack the ongoing 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in an apparent attempt to push for the island's so-called meaningful participation in the world body's mechanisms and agencies.

In fact, even before this year's UNGA opened in New York on Sept 10, Taipei had time and again hyped up the false narrative that UN Resolution 2758 — which, passed on Oct 25, 1971, rightly recognized the PRC as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations" and stripped Taiwan of its representation at the UN and its related organizations — was being misinterpreted to keep the island from participating in the world body.

On Sept 20, nine of Taiwan's so-called diplomatic allies called on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to include Taiwan in the deliberations at the UN Summit for the Future.

The wording of Resolution 2758, however, is unambiguous and its intention clear: "to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it".

This resolution settled once and for all the political, legal, and procedural issues of China's representation at the UN. It also spelled out that China has one seat at the UN, so there is no such thing as "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan".

The latest attempt to muddy the waters over Taiwan's true status at the UNGA was propelled by the undercurrent of the US' collusion with the island's separatists. The US has been playing the Taiwan card with increasing frequency in its effort to exert strategic pressure on China.

Despite its repeated pledges that it does not support "Taiwan independence", the Biden administration has employed various tactics to interfere in the Taiwan question and collude with separatist forces on the Chinese island.

On Sunday, representatives of 26 US drone companies, along with officials from the US Department of Commerce and the Department of Defense, arrived in Taipei on a four-day visit, which is yet another move Washington has taken to enhance the island's defense capabilities and resist Beijing's reunification push.

Beijing has made it clear that no matter what tricks the pro-independence forces play, they cannot change the fact that Taiwan is an integral part of China nor will they weaken its resolve and capability to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, let alone prevent the island's reunification with the motherland.

The calculated move at the UNGA is aimed at not just damaging Beijing's image but also prepping the international community to view it as the party in the wrong and therefore side against it should the US' gamesmanship precipitate a cross-strait conflict.

EU maneuvering for trade advantage

In an unprecedented move, the European Commission on Monday launched a consultation request at the World Trade Organization against an ongoing investigation by the Chinese authorities into the compatibility of European Union dairy industry subsidies with global trade rules.

The opening of consultations is the first step to settle a trade dispute under the WTO framework. Proceedings start with a mandatory period of 60 days for the parties to consult each other. If the consultations do not lead to a satisfactory solution, the European Commission has said it will ask the WTO to set up an adjudicating panel.

It is the first time the European Union has challenged a trade investigation at the initial stage, and comes after months of trade tensions between China and the EU over the anti-subsidy probe that the European Commission launched into imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles last October. A final decision on the tariffs is expected within days. Currently after rounds of painful negotiations the additional tariff rate is still as high as 36.3 percent.

The Chinese investigation into EU dairy subsidies is actually part of China's countermeasures against the European Commission's moves regarding Chinese EVs, which also include antidumping probes into the EU's exports of brandy and pork products to the Chinese market, which Beijing claims seriously harm the interests of relevant domestic industries.

The EU is in a better position than any other party to know the true cause of the dispute with its major trading partner, and it is well aware that its protectionist actions against Chinese-made EVs originate from some pro-US politicians doing Washington's bidding in an attempt to form a united front against China. US trade, commerce, financial, industrial and national security officials have met with their EU counterparts on multiple occasions over the past months to urge the EU to close its door to Chinese-made EVs.

The US imposed a rate of 100 percent of tariff on Chinese EVs and other green products in May, citing groundless "national security" and "subsidy" concerns. Canada followed suit last month.

Compared with the US and Canada, which directly imposed the tariffs, the EU has at least tried to find out whether the Chinese government has provided subsidy support to Chinese EV makers and if so in what way this might have given Chinese-made EVs an unfair advantage in the EU market.

But as Beijing said, the EU's so-called anti-subsidy investigation is unfair competition in the name of fair competition as it had a preset conclusion.

Notably the EU's moves regarding China under the WTO framework came after a meeting between EU Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis and his Chinese counterpart, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao, on Thursday last week in Brussels. After eight hours of talks, both sides considered the meeting a step toward easing the trade tensions between them.

In a statement on X after the meeting with Wang, Dombrovskis described talks as "constructive", saying that China and the EU would "intensify efforts to find an effective, enforceable and WTO-compatible solution to the dispute".

Yet, after the exchange between Dombrovskis and Wang, the Chinese side sent a questionnaire to all companies involved in the investigation, the European Dairy Association told the media. That seems to have triggered a change in the EU's stance. Its tone on Monday was more combative. "The Commission is determined to make full use of all available legal means to defend the EU industry against the abuse of trade defense instruments," said the bloc's executive in a news release.

"The consultation request at WTO level is to show that our Union is ready to step up its trade defense," the EDA Secretary General Alexander Anton told the media in an interview.

But it is too early to say that the last-moment efforts by the two sides to try and settle their trade disputes have failed, as these endeavors are clearly in a critical stage with both sides trying to gain the upper hand.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Innovative monetary tools to help development of capital market

China's central bank has announced a series of monetary and financial policies to boost the economy and the capital market, including cutting the reserve requirement ratio and policy interest rate to bring down the market benchmark interest rate, lowering interest rates on existing mortgages, lowering the minimum down payment ratio for mortgages of second-home buying to the same as that of first-home buying, and creating new monetary policy tools to support the development of the stock market.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, said at a news conference on Tuesday that the central bank will increase the intensity of monetary policies and improve their precision, to create a good monetary and financial environment for the stable growth and high-quality development of the economy.

The gradual implementation of these policies and the continuous release of

their effects are expected to effectively stimulate domestic demand, stabilize the credit level, and promote a steady recovery of the economy. Affected by such policies, China's stock market has bounced robustly, the real estate chain has strengthened across the board, and the renminbi exchange rate has risen steadily.

Since August, the pace of local bond issuance and financing in China has risen significantly, and the net financing scale of local debt in September hit the highest level for a single month this year. Commercial banks, the main issuers of local debt, have thus been under financial pressure. Therefore, the latest cut of 0.5 percentage points, which will provide long-term liquidity of about 1 trillion yuan (\$142.37 billion) to the financial market, and the further likely cut of another 0.25 to 0.5 percentage points in the remaining part of the year will reduce the debt cost of commercial banks and supplement their medium

and long-term liquidity.

It is important that the RRR cut will release more sufficient long-term liquidity, smooth out excessive capital fluctuations especially at the time when government bond supply is peaking, and strengthen the coordination between monetary and fiscal policies. The RRR reduction will also help optimize the capital structure, save banks' costs, and alleviate the pressure of their net interest margin narrowing to a certain extent, while providing long-term low-cost funds for the banking system, stabilizing credit expansion, and improving their incentive and sustainability of serving the real economy.

The expected new monetary policy tools, which will guide the flow of funds to the stock market, are expected to be a shot in the arm for investors, maintain the stability of China's capital market, and promote its more stable and high-quality development.

— SECURITIES DAILY

High-fence move to control undersea data flows

The United States has drafted a "New York Joint Statement" that it plans to sign with its European allies on the margins of the ongoing United Nations General Assembly, the aim of which is to promote "reliable and trusted cable components and services" and "encourage undersea cable network service providers and operations and maintenance providers to have transparent ownership, partnerships, and corporate governance structures". Many see that as a move to edge Chinese businesses out of the global undersea cable supply chain.

Although around 99 percent of international data passes through it, China

has never been involved or sabotaged any international submarine cable network. On the contrary, it was the US that sent sailors and marines to cut submarine telegraph cables between Spain and the Philippines and Cuba to secure its victory in the US' 1898 war with Spain. Reportedly, 51 of the 112 Congressional Medals of Honor awarded in the Spanish-American War went to those who cut the cables.

The US has mastered the art of stealing data from undersea cables. The Sea-wolf-class nuclear-powered submarines designed in 1983 and first deployed in 1997 can intercept data in undersea cables, while according to a US media

report, the USS *Jimmy Carter* can "float above these fiber-optic cables ... and physically cut into them, intercepting the vast data streams".

So, the US trying to suppress Chinese enterprises in the undersea cable supply chain in the name of national security is a classic case of a "thief crying stop thief".

The US wants to deprive countries the right to develop the submarine cable industry and independently choose submarine cable suppliers. China opposes the move and will defend the legitimate rights of Chinese enterprises. The US' hegemonic actions will fail.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Another attempt to sell distorted values of US

In his final address to the United Nations General Assembly as US President on Tuesday, Joe Biden declared that the United States must not retreat from the world.

In denial of the ugly role the United States has played in the Middle East crisis and the Russia-Ukraine conflict under his administration, Biden highlighted the US and its allies' support for Tel Aviv and Kyiv, portraying it as their contribution to safeguarding justice and order.

His address to the world body was widely seen as one of the last high-profile opportunities for the US president to press his case. Although he tried to impress his listeners with his de facto farewell speech, it will have found few receptive ears, as it is a wide consensus, even among US allies, that the US holds the key to put an end to the two crises. Compared with four years

ago, even if Biden has done something to repair the estrangement his predecessor created between the US and its allies, the world has become even more divided today, thanks to his administration's "value diplomacy" and zero-sum game mindset in handling foreign affairs.

"We are stronger than we think" when the world acts together, Biden said. But the challenges the US is confronted with today, at home and abroad, are no less complicated than they were prior to his administration, and even the US and its allies are not on the same wavelength on many key issues, as the US under his administration, still implements a de facto "America first" policy.

When he took office, Biden promised to rejuvenate the US' relations around the world and to extract the country from "forever wars" in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But after its withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has left behind a mess. And while the adminis-

tration has sought to reinvigorate the US alliance network, it has managed to rub many of its allies the wrong way and the US' relations with Russia and China have fallen to their lowest points since the end of the Cold War.

Biden said there will always be forces with a desire to "go it alone". That the Democrats and the Republicans have stooped to new lows these years in their chase for power and their overt and covert interest exchanges is a vivid reflection of how those forces are produced.

And the lasting sufferings of the Palestinians in the Middle East are another reflection of the consequences of allowing these forces to define the US' "leadership" in the world.

It is shameful that Biden tried to transform the rostrum of the UN into a stage on which to peddle his brazen pro-war stance when the majority of UN members have already made it clear they are not willing to buy what he is selling.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Nii Quaye-Kumah

Journey to self-sufficiency globally significant

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, we savor the moment to reflect on the nation's remarkable agricultural transformation over time. From being a country that grappled with food insecurity and rural poverty, today China has successfully secured food for over 1.4 billion people — nearly 18 percent of the world's population — while utilizing just 7 percent of the world's arable land.

China's rural areas are home to 36.11 percent of its population. Rural areas in developing countries — where hunger and extreme poverty are most concentrated — also hold the greatest potential for food production. It has been proven that investing in these areas drive economic growth and create jobs. China's journey from severe food deficiency to becoming the largest food producer, offers valuable lessons for global food and nutrition security efforts. This is especially so at a time when the world faces mounting challenges that impact food security such as conflict, climate variabilities, economic downturns and resource scarcity.

Since 1980, the International Fund for Agricultural Development has been a steadfast partner in China's rural development journey. Through 35 projects in some of the harshest and very remote rural areas, IFAD has supported over 20 million rural women and men, improving their livelihoods. This partnership has been pivotal in supporting China's extraordinary efforts to eliminate extreme poverty and enhance national and global food and nutrition security.

Forty years ago, more than 90 percent of China's rural population lived in absolute poverty. In its early partnership with China, IFAD focused on addressing immediate challenges of the country. The goal was straightforward: to help farmers grow more food — crop, livestock and fisheries. Through financial aid and technical support, IFAD worked with China to enhance grain, animal and fisheries production, modernize farming techniques, and promote food security.

As China transitioned to a market-oriented economy at the end of the 20th century, IFAD's focus expanded beyond just food production to innovative technologies, as well as enhancing smallholders, particularly women and ethnic minorities' access to finance and improving their linkage to markets. This strategic shift empowered rural women and marginalized communities by providing them with essential skills and integrating their voi-

ces into decision-making processes. Additionally, IFAD promoted the adoption of modern agricultural technologies, which contributed to more efficient farming practices and increased participation in the market economy.

When China declared in 2012, its goal to eradicate extreme poverty by lifting the last 98.99 million people out of extreme poverty by 2020, IFAD's partnership strategy shifted toward a more holistic approach. The new direction aligned with China's broader vision for agriculture and food security, incorporating rural revitalization, green and inclusive development, and digital transformation, all aimed at ensuring no one is left behind. As part of its contribution, IFAD is supporting China in implementing farmland enhancement in remote areas to improve the quality, productivity, and sustainability of agricultural land in Sichuan province and Ningxia Hui autonomous region. In Yunnan province, IFAD has funded women and ethnic minority entrepreneurs like Ms Zou Jie from Huaping county, whose company created 15,000 job opportunities and significantly boosted the local economy. In Hunan province, IFAD built village irri-

As China continues its journey, it is essential to ensure that all citizens have access to nutritious food in addition to enhancing food production.

gation infrastructure and is promoting the use of organic fertilizer, so that the cooperatives supported will be resilient and still cultivate the land whenever rain is scarce. Additionally, IFAD projects are also creating employment opportunities for the youth so they will remain in or return to rural areas.

China's transformation has not only benefited its own rural communities but has positioned the country as a leader in global food security initiatives. According to the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report 2024, jointly published by IFAD, FAO, WFP, UNICEF and WHO in July, an estimated 28.9 percent of the global population in 2023 was moderately or severely food insecure. Through South-South and Triangular

Cooperation, China and IFAD have shared agricultural knowledge, innovation and technologies with other developing nations, safeguarding the food security and livelihoods of local farmers. China's \$10 million contribution to establish the China-IFAD SSTC Facility in 2018, along with another \$10 million replenishment in June 2024, has made the facility pivotal for knowledge and expertise exchange and technology transfer within the Global South.

Despite these notable achievements, some challenges exist. As China continues its journey, it is essential to ensure that all citizens have access to nutritious food in addition to enhancing food production. The future of China's food security will hinge on integrating sustainable agricultural practices that promote environmental stewardship and public health. This includes efforts to reduce food loss and waste, improve the food systems, and enhance the overall nutritional quality of food, while ensuring that progress in food production translates into improved health and well-being for all.

Overall, China's journey is a testament to what can be achieved through careful and systematic planning, innovation, policy reform, and international cooperation. The country has demonstrated its prolificacy through the evolutions in the poverty and food security landscapes. This noteworthy evolution has significantly contributed to global food security, stabilizing food markets, and providing lessons in resilience and growth. China's success is not a fluke — it's a product of meticulous planning, investment, and commitment of its leadership. It demonstrates how targeted strategies and collaborative efforts can drive substantial improvements in agricultural productivity and rural development.

As China transitions into a carbon-neutral economy, IFAD will continue its strong partnership to support China to sustain and expand the gains in poverty alleviation and comprehensively realize rural revitalization. This would be done through supporting innovative and resilient rural livelihood practices, greening the agricultural sector through environmentally and climate-smart interventions, and sharing the knowledge generated through our activities and those of others in-country with other developing countries through South-South and triangular cooperation.

The author is IFAD's representative in China and head of Asia and the Pacific Regional Centre for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Mei Xinyu

EU subsidy probe a betrayal of commitment

By launching an anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs) in the name of mitigating the risks highly subsidized EVs pose to European automakers, the European Commission has not only deviated from global trade norms but also betrayed the European Union's solemn pledge to promote free and fair trade. China does not want another tariff war but is not afraid to take on the EU if the latter launches one.

China's anti-subsidy and anti-dumping investigations on EU dairy products, pork, brandy, and other agricultural products were initiated in response to applications from domestic industries, rather than as retaliatory trade measures against the EU. However, these measures can help the EU and its member states deeply realize the essence of the complementary and mutually beneficial nature of China-EU economic and trade relations.

The EU's anti-subsidy investigation, launched in October 2023, without receiving any complaints from EU automakers or EU member state governments, violates Article 11 of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. But instead of stopping the investigation, the EU released the draft of its final decision on Aug 20, 2024, further breaching global economic and trade rules and practices.

China has always abided by international norms while the EU has been trampling on international trade rules and practices that have developed in the more than seven decades since the end of World War II. Incidentally, these rules and practices were established by European and American leaders.

This spirit of cooperation and openness led to significant tariff reductions and facilitated Europe's economic growth.

For years, the EU has been slowly but surely resorting to protectionism, earning the nickname "Fortress Europe". Its economic policy is marked by increasing regulations which hinder innovation, which has led to its declining economic vitality and global influence.

This is not to deny European countries' significant contributions to trade liberalization and the multilateral trading system. Europe's contribution to global trade can be gauged from the fact that all the directors-general of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (the precursor to the WTO) were Europeans — Eric Wyndham-White, Olivier Long, Arthur Dunkel and Peter Sutherland. Also, three of the seven directors-general of the WTO were Europeans: Peter Sutherland, Renato Ruggiero and Pascal Lamy.

Notably, the EU's predecessor, the European Community, was founded with the explicit aim of fostering economic growth by eliminating trade barriers on the continent. This spirit of cooperation and openness led to significant tariff reductions and facilitated trade, which in turn fueled Europe's economic growth.

Evidently, the EU's stance toward China, characterized by protectionism and restrictive measures, represents a significant deviation from its original commitment to free and fair trade, and this could lead to painful consequences. Europe's share of the global economy has been shrinking over the years. In 1990, the 12-member European Community accounted for 29.6 percent of global GDP and 31.2 percent of global exports. But in 2023, the 20-member eurozone accounted for only 14.7 percent of global GDP and 24.7 percent of global exports. Even if the United Kingdom were added to the EU, the figures would increase to just 17.9 percent and 26.9 percent.

Hence, the EU cannot afford to let economic globalization perish. Since the "Age of Discovery", Europe's rise has been driven by free and fair trade. The two world wars, which ultimately undermined Europe, were triggered, either directly or indirectly, by anti-globalization moves.

The EU should realize that its decline as a promoter of free trade and open economy will greatly undermine its global status.

Therefore, it is imperative that EU policymakers rethink their approach to global trade. Implementing protectionist measures under the guise of "decoupling" and "de-risking" from the Chinese economy will be detrimental to the economic prospects of not only China but also the EU. In a world interconnected by trade and investment, unilateral restrictions would only serve to isolate economies and stifle growth.

China, as a responsible member of the global trading community, has consistently adhered to WTO rules and promoted open and inclusive trade policies. So it is time the EU reconsidered its trade policy and fulfilled its original pledge to promote global development through free and fair trade.

The author is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Kazuyuki Motohoshi

Japan's patient capital lesson for China

Japan's economic success is often attributed to a blend of economic, cultural and social factors, with "patient capital" playing a pivotal role. "Patient capital" refers to long-term, stable investment, which enables companies to achieve sustainable growth in the long run.

This approach is in sharp contrast to the short-term profit maximization often seen in Western economies, where the management almost always is focused on ensuring stockholders get handsome returns in the short term. Japan's unique model of patient capital has significantly contributed to its industrial competitiveness, particularly in high-tech manufacturing sectors such as semiconductors and automobiles.

In Japan, patient capital is deeply embedded in the economic institutions, such as the main banking system, and long-term business relationships. Historically, the keiretsu system — a network of interlinked corporations that typically include manufacturers, suppliers and banks — has led the economic development in Japan. The cross-stock ownership among keiretsu members has almost disappeared, but every large corporation in Japan has its own main bank, not only as a lender but also as a business partner.

The main banking system is based on contingency governance, where a bank intervenes only when a borrower faces financial difficulty. In such a situation, the main bank sometimes takes over the borrowing company's management in order to revitalize it by injecting more capital into it. The fact that the main bank is powerful, and efficient in corpo-

rate governance makes the role of the stockholder relatively weak in a company's corporate financial structure.

This structure provides Japanese companies with the stability needed to undertake ambitious, long-term projects such as investments in radical innovation programs without the fear of short-term market fluctuations.

This long-term relationship is found not only in Japan's financial system but also in its business relationships including those related to supplier management. For example, in-depth research into Japan's competitiveness in the automobile sector has revealed that mutual support between OEM (original equipment manufacturer such as Toyota and Honda) and its suppliers is a main factor behind its success. The OEMs support their suppliers by providing technical training for them, and encourage them to come up with their own ideas for innovation with financial incentives.

Such a stable business relationship is important for suppliers to share a long-term perspective of product development with the OEMs. This Japanese system contrasts with the system prevalent in Western economies, where the objective of procuring parts from outside is to reduce the cost of production.

Japanese-style supplier management is becoming a global standard, diffusing into the auto industries of the United States and the European Union.

The influence of patient capital in Japan's industrial competitiveness is multifaceted. First, patient capital has enabled Japanese companies to invest in cutting-edge technologies without the immediate pressure to deliver profits. Such an economic environment has contributed to the birth of innovative companies such as Sony and Nintendo.

Second, the stability provided by patient capital allows Japanese companies to more effectively weather economic downturns. During the 2008 global financial crisis, many Japanese companies were able to maintain their workforce and continue investing in R&D, unlike their Western counterparts which resorted to drastic cost-cutting measures. This resilience helped Japanese companies sustain their industrial base and competitive position globally.

Third, patient capital has also boosted Japan's ability to engage in long-term strategic planning, with the country's focus on quality, continuous improvement (kaizen) and customer satisfaction being the outcomes of this long-term orientation.

However, the patient capital system also has some drawbacks. For example, a long-term business orientation can become an obstacle for change during turbulent times. Artificial intelligence and digitalization are transforming businesses like never before, and Japanese companies have difficulty in adopting such new technologies because of their organizational rigidity. Also, new technologies such as the internet of things are inducing more dynamic changes in the global supply chains, rendering the stable supplier-purchaser relationship system obsolete.

According to the capitalism theory of Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, liberalized market economies, such as the US and the United Kingdom, have a comparative advantage in terms of radical innovation, while coordinated market economies such as Japan and continental European countries are more suited to promote incremental innovation. This theory is consistent with the fact that Japan is an automobile-manufacturing powerhouse (based on continuous innovation), but relatively weak in software

(for lack of radical innovation).

As a country seeking to transition from a manufacturing-led economy to one driven by innovation and advanced technology, China could learn from the concept of patient capital. Like Japan, China aims to lead in sectors such as AI, robotics and electric vehicles (it is already the global leader in EVs). Embracing patient capital could enable Chinese enterprises to invest in these technologies to promote innovation without the pressure of making short-term profits.

This shift could help China achieve its goal of becoming a global leader in high-tech industries. In addition, China's transition to a more sustainable growth model will require significant investments in green technologies. Patient capital could play a crucial role in supporting these long-term investments, helping China address environmental challenges while maintaining economic growth.

Japan's experience with patient capital offers valuable insights into how long-term, stable investment can enhance industrial competitiveness. China's economic environment is completely different from Japan's, because of its super-competitive product market and short-term profit-making mechanism. As China seeks to transform its economy, patient capital could lay the foundation for the Chinese economy's sustained, long-term growth in high-tech industries.

But since Japan is mulling changing its stance on the economic environment, China needs to carefully examine the patient capital system before embracing it.

The author is a professor at the Graduate School of Engineering, The University of Tokyo. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

ULRICH PECK

Wires uncrossed

China's emergence as a global power is the hope and guarantor for a fairer and more harmonious world

In July, the German government and mobile phone providers agreed to remove any components of Chinese manufacturers from the country's 5G network by 2026. This is also to take place for the access to networks, primarily radio masts, by 2029. The German government wants this agreement to begin being implemented



by the end of 2025 or start of 2026. Penalties are threatened if this timetable is breached. In July 2023, the Federal Cabinet approved a 61-page paper, setting out how Germany intends to deal with China in the future: "We do not want to decouple ourselves from China, but rather minimize our risks." The German government is working toward a "de-risking of economic relations with China."

The reasons given are China has changed and is acting more aggressively. The accusation that China is not part of the West's "community of values" prompts no desire to decouple from China, however, because the country is needed as an economic and climate action partner and the Chinese market is needed for German products.

None of this has anything to do with democracy and freedom, international understanding and openness to the world.

The German economy has been in decline for years, its infrastructure is considered dilapidated and in dire need of renovation because there has been no investment for decades. But what do you read about this in the German press? The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung puts the icing on the cake, writing: "Measured by its economic output per capita, China is not even in the second league. In this respect, China is similar to emerging countries such as Costa Rica, Argentina, Mexico or Romania, which have a similar per capita income."

Not a word about the fact that China has lifted around 800 million people out of abject poverty in just a few decades. That is as many people as the combined populations of the European Union, with 450 million, and the United States, with 350 million. Nothing about the fact that per capita income in China has risen 50-fold over the past three decades. Nothing about the fact that China's success sto-

The consistent policy of the CPC to further increase the prosperity of the population, and to constantly strengthen the country's economic and defense power with a high global impact, are important guarantees in the current tense global political situation to stand up for the resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace with a balanced and predictable policy.

ry continues unabated — in contrast to the EU and the US.

Against the backdrop of an economic war unleashed by the US, the EU, above all Germany, is increasingly joining under the dictates of the US, China is pushing ahead with independent development of cutting-edge technologies in order to make itself independent of foreign countries.

The third plenum of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in July spoke of "new quality productive forces". In the German Democratic Republic in the 1960s, we called this "disruption prevention". The West tried to gag us economically during the Cold War — just as the West is trying to do with China today. The difference between the GDR back then and China today, however, is that China now has the economic power with constant growth potential and the Communist Party has the political leadership strength, based on a viable social and economic concept, to successfully plan and, above all, implement such a strategy. This is because at the third plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee in December 1978, Deng Xiaoping introduced a reform and opening-up policy that is now to be deepened comprehensively and with the aim of advancing Chi-

nese modernization, as President Xi Jinping explained at the 2024 plenum.

The fact that these reform and opening-up measures will be implemented by the 80th anniversary of the People's Republic in 2029 is a testament to the dynamism of the Chinese economy. This will enable further steps to be taken, at the end of which the goal of creating "a socialist market economy with high standards" and "improving the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics" will have been achieved.

I was a political functionary in the GDR. We also made bold plans, just like the Soviet Union did. But quite a few of them turned out to be castles in the air. We lacked the economic power, the necessary driving forces of production and ultimately the confidence in victory to fulfill all our dreams.

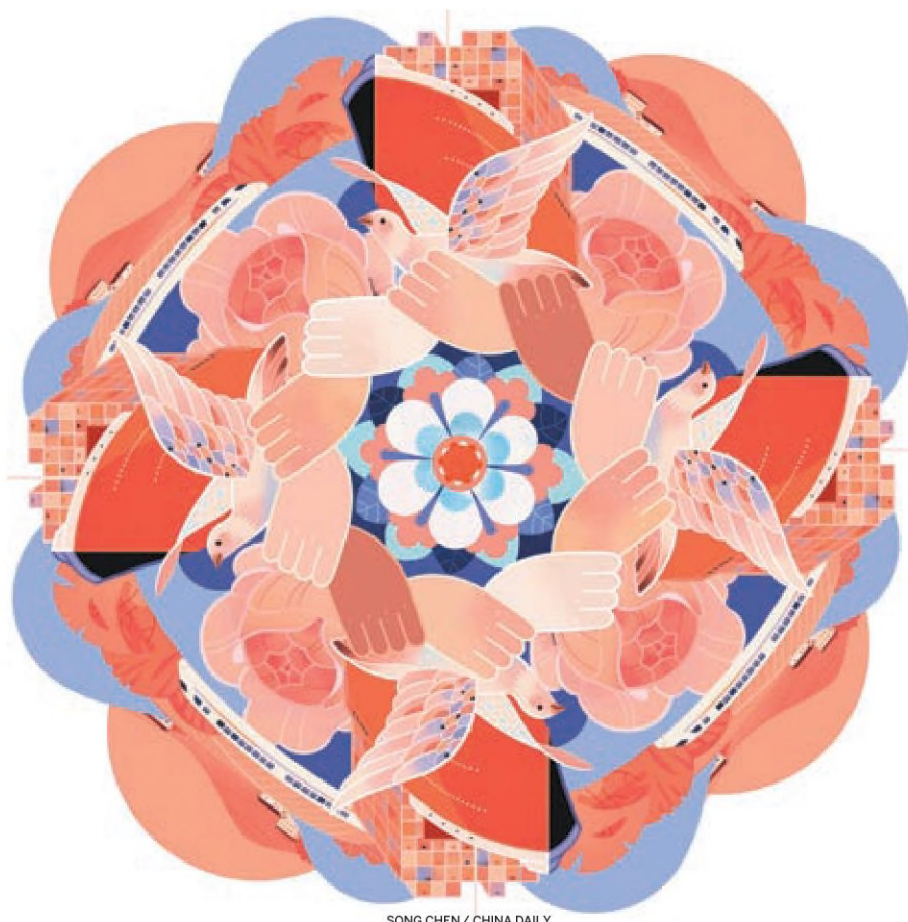
With my own experience, combined with the demise of Soviet-style European socialism, I take a rather critical view of lofty plans — with one exception: the resolutions of the CPC, coupled with the capabilities of the Chinese people.

The recently held third plenum provided the right contemporary answers to these false claims. China has now strategically taken over the global market leadership in climate protection technologies. About 39 percent of all wind turbines worldwide are located in China. Around one-third of all solar power systems are installed here, and China dominates over 90 percent of the global market for solar cell production. China is now also a leader in electromobility.

The development of new quality productive forces will not only secure the future of China, but also of the world.

The consistent policy of the CPC to further increase the prosperity of the population, and to constantly strengthen the country's economic and defense power with a high global impact, are important guarantees in the current tense global political situation to stand up for the resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace with a balanced and predictable policy.

The author is a researcher at Edition Ost in Berlin. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

SHI XIANJIN

United we stand

Countries should maintain the global multilateral system, control the escalation of geopolitical risks through dialogue and enhance the resilience of supply chains

From great power competition to widespread regional conflicts, the global geopolitical landscape has turned into a dynamic of multipolarity. Geopolitical tensions have led to the fragmentation of global trade and investment along ideological lines. However, all countries cannot avoid the looming threats of blocked corridors, rising costs and supply chain fragility that have already been taking their toll on multilateral trade and open economies.

Geopolitical risks have reduced the efficiency of the global supply chains. Europe and the United States' so-called de-risking policies in the name of economic security will further lengthen the global value chain, which will impact greatly on global welfare, prices, imports and economic growth. The supply process from raw materials to finished goods, which could have been achieved within China, is now being split into a number of global segments with unnecessary production unbundling. Maria-Grazia Attinas, an economist at the European Central Bank found in 2023 that the largest loss in global welfare would be between 12.8 percent and 20.6 percent if East and West were to be generally decoupled.

In the extreme case of strategic geopolitical decoupling, according to Attinas's research, global imports would lose between 6 and 9 percent of the current total volume, and in the case of decoupling of regional trade blocs, the losses would be as high as 35 to 44 percent, with trade in intermediate goods falling by 29 to 38 percent. Marjin Bolhuis, an economist of the Strategy, Policy and Review Department of the International Monetary Fund, found that an East-West decoupling would result in 2.3 percent output loss of global GDP, equivalent to the size of the French economy. Permanent losses in developed economies and emerging markets will amount to 2 to 3 percent of GDP, and losses in low-income countries will exceed 4 percent.

Already, affected by the Red Sea crisis, the growth rate of export container tariffs on the China-Europe and the Baltic-Red Sea routes has been soaring since the beginning of April this year, from 45.7 percent and 33.9 percent year-on-year in April to 240 percent and 125 percent in August. The Red Sea crisis affects shipping from China to

Countries around the world should actively maintain the normalization of the global multilateral system, control the escalation of geopolitical risks through dialogue and communication, reduce geopolitical distortions and interventions in economic laws, enhance the resilience of supply chains, and reduce the impact of geopolitical risks.

Europe, and the shipping time around the Cape of Good Hope increases by about 15 days. These serious costs are ringing the death knell for the economic globalization that has prospered for decades.

In the face of economic challenges posed by geopolitical risks, all countries should work together to safeguard the multilateral trading system and avoid economic fragmentation, while providing protection for the most vulnerable economies. Geopolitical differences should be resolved through dialogue and cooperation, not confrontation. Only by joining hands can countries minimize the negative impact of geopolitics on global trade and economics and ensure the sustained and healthy development of the global economy.

Economies, whether developed or developing, have reasons to maintain and reform the existing multilateral trading system. The top priority lies in strengthening the functioning of the World Trade Organization, especially its dispute settlement mechanism, so as to prevent the proliferation of unilateral trade barriers. In areas where national preferences are largely aligned, countries should push for high-impact reform through multilateral efforts. For areas of divergence, deeper integration through regional trade agreements could be considered, while maintaining an open and non-discriminatory approach to other countries. In addition, credible safeguards, such as safe corridors for food and medicine, can be established to protect vulnerable countries and mitigate the impact of global spillovers.

In this respect, China has persisted in promoting multilateralism and global economic integration, and sought cooperation with Western countries in areas of common interest, such as climate change and global health. China also needs to deepen economic and trade relations with developing countries to help them cope with the impact of geopolitical divisions, and deepen economic and trade cooperation with traditional trading partners such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union and Latin America, and actively develop the Belt and Road Initiative.

Moreover, China can accelerate the construction of a global network of high-standard free trade zones, and build a Global South economic and trade network. Apart from that, China can strengthen regional economic and trade cooperation with ASEAN, Central Asia, South Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe, and push forward the development of energy resources, infrastructure construction, agriculture, and other traditional areas. China will continue to play a more active role in international organizations and promote reform of global economic governance. It will also play a stable and reliable role in the global industry chain by further deepening reform and opening-up, so as to safeguard the security of the global supply chain.

Western countries should be prudent when imposing trade sanctions and restrictions. They should avoid exacerbating global economic fragmentation and endeavor to maintain economic ties with emerging markets and developing countries. This is not only conducive to the maintenance of global economic stability but also in the long-term interest of Western countries. Countries around the world should actively maintain the normalization of the global multilateral system, control the escalation of geopolitical risks through dialogue and communication, reduce geopolitical distortions and interventions in economic laws, enhance the resilience of supply chains, and reduce the impact of geopolitical risks.

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ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

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Digital trade in spotlight at global expo

By FAN FEIFEI in Hangzhou
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Greater efforts are needed to strengthen international cooperation in digital trade and to collectively formulate international rules related to such business activity, a sector which has injected new impetus into world economic growth, officials and experts said.

China is willing to work with other nations to support the deeper application of cutting-edge technologies, promote the balanced development of digital trade in all fields, and help small and medium-sized enterprises worldwide achieve sustainable development through digital and intelligent transformation, said Zheng Jianbang, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress, the country's top legislature.

Zheng made the remarks at the launch ceremony of the third Global Digital Trade Expo, which opened in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday.

He said China has attached great importance to the development of digital trade, which is regarded as one of the three pillars supporting the development of a strong trading nation, alongside trade in goods and services.

Zheng stressed the need to deepen dialogue and cooperation with other countries in the aspect of governance and to actively take part in the formulation of multilateral, bilateral and regional rules concerning digital trade, so as to create an open, fair, just and nondiscriminatory environment for the develop-



An ostrich-shaped robot on display at the third Global Digital Trade Expo, which opened in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. DONG XUMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

ment of global digital trade.

Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao said his ministry will strengthen the construction of digital trade mechanisms, promote high-standard opening-up, and work with all parties to build digital trade into a new engine for common development, ultimately injecting new momentum into global economic growth.

Wang said more than 400 new products and technologies are being showcased during the expo, while a future-oriented industry exhibition area has been set up for the first time, demonstrating cutting-edge technologies in fields such as artificial intelligence.

Featuring Kazakhstan and Thailand as guests of honor, the expo, with the theme of "Digital Trade, Global Access", has attracted more than 1,500 companies from 32 countries and regions, with more than 30,000 professional buyers having registered for the event, including

over 6,000 overseas buyers.

Digital trade in China has made remarkable progress in recent years. Data from the Ministry of Commerce showed that China's import and export of digitally-delivered service trade rose 3.7 percent year-on-year to 1.42 trillion yuan (\$202.2 billion) in the first six months of 2024, a record-high.

Moreover, the country's cross-border e-commerce imports and exports reached 1.22 trillion yuan in the first half of the year, an increase of 10.5 percent year-on-year, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Yi Lianhong, Party secretary of Zhejiang province, said the province will accelerate the building of industrial chains of digital trade, vigorously develop new business models such as digital product trade and digital service trade, ease market access in the digital domain, and bolster safe cross-border data flows. Zhaslan Madiyev, minister of Dig-

ital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan, said the expo provides an unique opportunity to showcase innovative technologies, products and ecosystems in global digital trade, while offering an open forum for exploring new markets and fostering opportunities for economic and trade collaboration.

Kazakhstan has established strong cooperation relations with major Chinese e-commerce platforms like Alibaba and JD, further strengthening its role in the global digital trade arena, while Chinese delivery company YTO Express is partnering with Kazakhstan to build the largest e-commerce logistics center in Central Asia, he noted.

He added that his country looks forward to further deepening its collaboration with China in areas such as logistics, digital trade and the creation of new technological hubs.

Trade-in campaign bearing fruit

Promotional program aims to boost consumption, spur on economy

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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China's accelerated push for promoting trade-in deals for products is paying off, with significant growth in consumer spending on key goods like automobiles and home appliances, providing a solid base for continued economic recovery in the following months, said officials and experts.

Although the broader economy is still facing pressure from lackluster domestic demand and mounting external uncertainties, they said the trade-in policy will further boost consumption as well as spur investment and production in relevant sectors and products.

"The push for driving trade-in deals for consumer goods has effectively stimulated consumption potential, directly driving rapid sales growth among key consumer goods including automobiles, home appliances and home furnishings," said Wen Hua, deputy director of the Department of Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection at the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator.

Wen said at a news conference held by the NDRC in Beijing on Wednesday that the policy measures also effectively boosted investment and profitability in related industries, further enhancing the development momentum of relevant enterprises.

Geng Hongzhou, an official with the Ministry of Commerce, noted that the trade-in policy is crucial to boosting consumer demand, adding that localities will be urged to accelerate the push for promoting the policy amid the upcoming shopping spree in October.

Their remarks came after the government allocated 150 billion yuan (\$21.36 billion) in ultra-long-term special treasury bonds in August to support trade-in deals for consumer goods.

From Sept 1 to Sept 22, sales of passenger cars grew 10 percent

month-on-month, while sales of new energy vehicles rose 7 percent on a monthly basis, said the China Automobile Dealers Association.

Citing third-party monitoring data, Wen said sales of refrigerators with high energy efficiency, air conditioners, washing machines, gas stoves and televisions grew sharply during the Sept 2-15 period, registering year-on-year increases of 27.1 percent, 135 percent, 22.4 percent, 49.7 percent and 220.9 percent, respectively.

Wen said the policy has also stimulated both investment and production of relevant sectors.

NDRC data showed investment in consumer goods manufacturing rose 14.9 percent year-on-year in the first eight months, while output of consumer goods manufacturing increased by 4.2 percent year-on-year in August.

Looking ahead, Huang Hanquan, head of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said China's economy will continue the recovery trend with a series of stimulus policies taking effect gradually, including the use of funds for promoting trade-in programs for consumer goods.

Wang Shengli, an official with the State Administration for Market Regulation, said the administration has placed great emphasis on ensuring the quality and safety of newly purchased products under the trade-in scheme.

So far, around 53,000 batches of products, including household appliances, e-bikes as well as home furnishing materials have been inspected nationwide, resulting in the detection and disposal of over 5,600 batches of defective products, Wang said.

Localities have sped up the implementation of the trade-in policy in a bid to further spur consumer demand and boost economic growth.

As of Tuesday, nearly 11 billion yuan had been disbursed in subsidies for trade-in deals for automobiles.

TRADE

CAFTA 3.0 strengthens China-ASEAN economic ties

By ZHONG NAN
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The early conclusion of negotiations for version 3.0 of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) will offer both China and member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations expanded market access for products and services in each other's markets, said scholars and business executives on Wednesday.

With both sides committed to expeditiously concluding the talks of this upgraded free trade deal, they said that CAFTA 3.0 marks a deepening of economic ties between China and ASEAN, focusing not only on goods trade, but also on sectors like digital technology, green growth and modern services.

Implemented in 2010, CAFTA has significantly reduced and eliminated tariffs on a wide range of goods traded between China and ASEAN countries. The upgrade negotiations for CAFTA 3.0 were launched in November 2022, according to information released by the Ministry of Commerce.

From Aug 30 to Sept 3, 2024, the ninth round of negotiations of CAFTA 3.0 was held in Bangkok,

Thailand, with both sides accelerating the negotiation process and making positive progress.

In addition to spurring economic growth and improving regional connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region, this upgraded agreement will diversify China-ASEAN business ties, reduce reliance on any single trade partner and increase resilience on global supply chains, said Lin Meng, director of the Modern Supply Chain Research Institute at Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Zhang Jinhua, a researcher specializing in regional economic cooperation at Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the upgraded agreement will involve cooperation in technology and education, helping ASEAN nations improve their industrial capacities, develop their digital economies and foster innovation.

In 2023, nearly 80 percent of China's outbound direct investment flowed into Asia, a 13.9 percent increase compared to the previous year. Among this, Chinese companies' investment in ASEAN reached \$25.12 billion, an increase of 34.7 percent on a yearly basis, according

to the Ministry of Commerce.

Ng Chee Keong, vice-president of North-East, Central and Southeast Asia of CrimsonLogic Pte Ltd, a Singapore-based digital trade solutions provider, said as Chinese companies accelerate their expansion into overseas markets, and the ASEAN region, with its proximity, cultural similarities and complementary resources, has naturally become a new hotspot for Chinese businesses' global strategies.

Chinese companies are showcasing their strong capabilities to Southeast Asia in multiple dimensions, including technology and product innovation, as well as brand building, said Ng, who is also the company's general manager for China.

"Their global expansion not only accelerates regional economic integration but also injects new vitality and hope into global economic cooperation," he added.

BEST Inc, a logistics services provider based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, launched its cross-border supply chain services and comprehensive SaaS (software as a service) solutions in Indonesia on Tuesday, marking another significant investment in Southeast Asia, following its expansions into Thailand, Viet-

nam, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines.

"In Southeast Asia, we have rapidly established our network primarily through franchising with the support of direct sales to balance service quality and costs," said Wang Xiaoqing, the group's vice-president and general manager of BEST International.

A "substantial upgrade" of the CAFTA may be announced during an upcoming summit in Laos, said ASEAN's Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn on Wednesday.

Noting that China and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have been working actively to accelerate the negotiations for the CAFTA 3.0, Kao said the announcement is likely to be made in October during the ASEAN-China Summit.

"This is going to be a very substantial upgrade of the FTA because we want to see that this FTA will become more relevant for the business," Kao told a group of reporters on the sidelines of the 21st China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Yang Han contributed to this story.

RCEP cooperation to continue growing, forum hears

By YANG HAN in Nanning
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Cooperation among Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership economies will continue to flourish and create benefits for the people of the region, a forum in South China's Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, opined on Tuesday.

RCEP allows the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to progress toward a new level of regional economic integration, laying the foundation for a thriving digital economy and expanding opportunities for traders and businesses across ASEAN and other RCEP countries, including China, said ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn at the RCEP High-Level

Dialogue on Economic and Trade Cooperation.

"By harmonizing rules of origin and reducing transaction costs, RCEP enhances the resilience of global and regional supply chains," said Kao.

Hosted by the Guangxi government, the dialogue was held on the sidelines of the 21st China-ASEAN Expo and China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning.

RCEP is a free trade agreement comprising 15 Asia-Pacific countries, making it the largest trade bloc in history.

Kao said that with both RCEP and China-ASEAN free trade area 3.0 in place, he is confident that trade and investment between ASEAN, China and other RCEP

partners will continue to flourish and expand. The ASEAN secretary-general was speaking under the theme Collaboratively Promoting the Upgrade of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 and Sharing the Benefits of Regional Economic Integration under RCEP.

Li Fei, Chinese vice-minister of commerce, said the synergy between RCEP and the China-ASEAN free trade area injected strong impetus into regional integration and the growth of global trade and investment.

China will continue to collaborate with all other RCEP members to jointly promote the high-quality regional implementation of free trade, deepen cooperation in various fields and accelerate the build-

ing of the China-ASEAN free trade area 3.0 for shared opportunities and a new future for regional cooperation, said Li.

The RCEP Regional Industrial Supply Chain Alliance Charter was also announced during the event.

Manothong Vongsay, vice-minister of industry and commerce of Laos, said the charter represents a key initiative to bolster cooperation in sectors vital to economic ecosystems.

"In an era where supply chain disruptions and global uncertainties are increasingly common, this alliance will play a crucial role in ensuring the stability and sustainability of our region's economic activities," said Manothong Vongsay.

State Grid safeguards harvest



Service team members from State Grid Zhumadian Power Supply Co visit a farmer in Zhaolou Village, city of Zhumadian, Henan province, to learn more about the area's electricity needs. The village will soon harvest 667 hectares of ecological rice. ZHANG YONGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Renminbi strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 308 pips to 7.0202 against the US dollar on Wednesday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

China expands AMC investment program

The National Financial Regulatory Administration has announced the expansion of the pilot program for

equity investments by financial asset management companies. According to a circular issued by the administration, the pilot program will now extend beyond Shanghai to include 17 other cities, including Beijing, Tianjin and Chongqing. Since 2020, financial AMCs established by major commercial banks have been conducting equity investment pilot programs in Shanghai. The circular introduces adjustments to the policies governing the Shanghai pilot program.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESSFOCUS



Lin Xingsheng (first right) helps Fijian people build a greenhouse for mushrooms in Naitasiri, Fiji, in September. GAO XIN / XINHUA

China's *Juncao* technology empowers Fijian woman

Biz owner praises project for changing lives of many people in her country

SUVA — From a farmer to the owner of a *Juncao* (mushroom grass) farm and the chairwoman of the Fiji Mushroom Farmers Association, Seruwaia Waiti Kabukabu feels so proud to be able to contribute to her community and empower female compatriots.

"Due to the use of *Juncao* technology, I have undergone many changes and fully developed myself. More importantly, I've embraced the concept of sustainable development, which allows us to gain more than just money, but a mindset advancement," said Kabukabu, who shared with Xinhua her story of how she came across *Juncao* and built her career successfully with this China-aided *Juncao* technical project.

Encountering technology

Kabukabu was a member of the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group and in 2019 she led 12 women to participate in a training course on *Juncao* technology held by the China-Fiji *Juncao* Technology Demonstration Center based in Nadi.

"For us, *Juncao* is a novel technology and an unknown area. We never thought this encounter would provide so many new opportunities for me and the women's group. It has changed the lives and careers of both myself and the other

women, and made our dreams come true," she said.

After the training, they received complimentary mushroom substrate bags from the center. Under the guidance of the Chinese experts, they began to harvest and sell mushrooms within 7-10 days, earning money for their family.

"Mushroom farming is simple and easy to learn. But with fast and good results, women are still very much surprised," Kabukabu said.

The 48-year-old woman recalled that she earned 2,500 Fijian dollars (\$1,142) from the first batch of mushroom substrates and bought appliances, mats, a cooking pot, food, and clothes for her family.

The increasing income also led Kabukabu to pay 1,600 Fijian dollars for a dairy training course, which is mostly dominated by men, she said. "As a woman, I'm proud to be able to pay the fees and graduate successfully."

Contributing to community

At present, Kabukabu is engaged in a community project that she has always been eager to be part of.

Access to clean water has always been a major challenge for her community for the past 20 years. Therefore, she used the mushroom

income to purchase pipelines and materials for building a dam. Now clean water has been connected to the roadside, which is a big step forward for her community.

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted the normal work and lives of many people, but this did not affect Kabukabu's enthusiasm to grow mushrooms.

Even during the pandemic, to meet the needs of local people, the *Juncao* center still insisted on delivering mushroom bags to farmers, she told Xinhua.

Kabukabu also mobilized some other women who lost their source of livelihood due to the pandemic to participate in the *Juncao* project.

At the end of 2023, Kabukabu became chairwoman of the Fiji Mushroom Farmers Association, which brought together mushroom growers from across the country to help fully explore the mushroom market.

She often organizes members to promote *Juncao* technology to the community of different districts, introducing the nutritional and medicinal value of mushrooms, and calling for a healthy diet.

Now they have many loyal customers, including supermarkets, universities and international organizations in Fiji. The price of orders ranges from 15 to 20 Fijian dollars per kilogram.

Promoting *Juncao* R&D

Besides mushroom farming,

Kabukabu's women's group also plants giant *Juncao* grass as feed for cows.

Giant *Juncao* grass grows fast and has a high yield with high crude protein, which will reduce the cost of feed and solve the problem of feed shortage in the dry season, said Lin Xingsheng, team leader of the China-Fiji *Juncao* Technology Demonstration Center.

In addition, the application of *Juncao* technology can effectively control riparian landslides and soil erosion, and improve coastal saline-alkali land in Fiji, Lin added.

"The women's group is passionate about and willing to continue applying this *Juncao* technology because it has many striking features such as low cost, quick returns, high profits, high eco-efficiency and wide adaptability," Kabukabu said.

The China-Fiji *Juncao* project has been benefiting Fiji since 2014. The project has increased local productivity, provided a diverse range of quality food, ensured food security, created job opportunities, empowered women and youth, and brought solutions to climate change and sustainable development to island countries.

"The group members and I are witnesses and beneficiaries of *Juncao* technology," Kabukabu said.

XINHUA

Silkworm harvesting improves livelihoods in Egyptian village

BEHEIRA, Egypt — Nagaa Awni, located in Beheira governorate about 200 kilometers from the Egyptian capital of Cairo, used to be a village of mud-brick and straw homes, relying on external aid for food and blankets.

Now, thanks to about eight years of efforts by locals through various development projects, the village has transformed into a self-sufficient area. One notable project is the silkworm initiative started by Ragab Awad, a former fisherman in his 40s.

In 2016, Awad conceived the idea of leveraging Nagaa Awni's agricultural strengths to plant mulberry trees for feeding silkworms, producing silk and making carpets.

"We don't want to be a burden on society. We want to build our community and create career opportunities for young people to reduce unemployment and poverty rates," Awad said. "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

Awad immediately purchased a box of 18,000 silkworm eggs and built a workshop on a piece of family land surrounded by mulberry trees. The workshop was divided into several rooms for nurturing worms, spreading cocoons into silk, and making carpets and accessories.

Awad initially lost money for the first two years of the project due to his lack of experience. "It was a learning process," he said. After watching online videos of Chinese farmers feeding and cleaning the worms, things began to improve. Now, Awad's workshop produces 720 kilograms of silk annually, significantly increasing his income.

From March to July this year, Awad raised 125,000 worms and donated a few hundred to local housewives. He later bought cocoons from these housewives at reasonable prices, encouraging them to find jobs.

Over the years, other villagers have joined the project at various stages. According to Awad, Nagaa Awni now has as many as 3,700 mulberry trees.

The story of Nagaa Awni's trans-



"We don't want to be a burden on society. We want to build our community and create career opportunities for young people to reduce unemployment and poverty rates."

Ragab Awad, an Egyptian sericulturist

formation has reached the Egyptian government, which, under the Decent Life Initiative launched by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in January 2019, has provided additional support to the village by building roads, a school and a clinic, and extending water, electricity and sewage lines.

Pointing to upgraded homes built with bricks and cement, Ismail Ibrahim, 32, feels proud of Nagaa Awni's positive changes over the years.

"We lived in extreme poverty for many years, and until recently it was difficult to afford enough food or pay for my children's education," Ibrahim said.

"Taking care of the worms is simple and easy, and the production is generous," Ibrahim said, adding that he is satisfied with his income nowadays.

Farah Abdelmalik, 19, was unable to continue her education due to her family's difficult living conditions. But now she can earn a healthy paycheck each month by training workers at Awad's workshop for silk knotting.

"Seeing the carpet as a final product is a moment of happiness for me," Abdelmalik said with a smile, adding that she hopes her products will one day be displayed at international exhibitions.

XINHUA



A farmer works on silkworm cocoons at Nagaa Awni village in Egypt in September. AHMED GOMAA / XINHUA

Chinese-manufactured ploughs boosting productivity among Kenyan farmers

NAIROBI — In the heart of Naro Moru, about 173 kilometers from Kenya's capital Nairobi, a Chinese-made plough has transformed how farmer Peter Kimani cultivates his land. Kimani, who owns the machine, said it has not only made his work easier, but also significantly boosted his harvest.

"I bought this machine a few months ago after searching for an affordable and suitable plough. My search led me to a Chinese company in Nairobi," Kimani said.

After visiting the supplier, Sincerity International Group, and inspecting the machine, he decided to purchase it for 130,000 Kenyan shillings (\$1,015.8).

Kimani was particularly impressed by the machine's features. It runs on diesel, can be linked to a chaff-cutter for cutting fodder and has sturdy steel wheels — qualities that match the needs of local farmers.

Kimani, who grows beans and peas for export, as well as carrots for the local market, now uses the machine to plough his four-acre

farm. "This is my second crop since I started using the plough," he said in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, adding that he previously relied on oxen to till the land.

Dylan Zhang, sales manager at Sincerity International Group, said the company provides a range of machines that handle tasks such as tilling, sowing, irrigation, weeding and harvesting, helping Kenyan farmers improve labor efficiency and increase production.

"Our goal is to ease the burden on rural labor and improve production efficiency," Zhang said. "For many years, farming relied heavily on manual labor, making the work arduous for farmers. With advancements in science and technology, we are integrating mechanization into agriculture to enhance productivity."

Zhang said that Sincerity International has distributors across Kenya, making it easy for both small and large-scale farmers to access quality machinery at affordable prices.

"Our prices range from as low as 54 dollars to 1,163 dollars for general, sowing, irrigation, semi-pro-



Dylan Zhang (fifth left) poses for a group photo with local farmers at a machine dealer promotional event in Nakuru county, Kenya, in July. XINHUA

cessing and micro-tillage machines," he said.

The company's efforts align with the Belt and Road Initiative, which

aims to support Africa's agricultural sector by investing in infrastructure, research and mechanization to boost food security. Cooperation

within this framework is expected to increase agricultural productivity in Africa and drive Chinese imports of farm products from the continent.

In Kenya, the BRI has facilitated knowledge exchanges and the adoption of modern agricultural technologies, with Chinese research institutions collaborating with local universities such as Egerton University and Jomo Kenyatta University. These partnerships have led to the development of high-yield seed varieties and strategies to combat crop diseases.

Experts at a forum in Nairobi in August highlighted the importance of international cooperation in advancing agricultural modernization, tackling hunger and reducing rural poverty. Ye Yujiang, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said that partnerships between China and Africa could enhance food security and improve rural incomes.

"As a Chinese agricultural machinery company, we are proud to contribute to Kenya's agricul-

ture modernization, and we are committed to doing even more," Zhang said.

Felister Makini, deputy director-general of research and partnerships at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization, praised China's efforts in training, technology transfer and innovation, which have helped small-scale farmers increase crop yields.

Kimani said that mechanization among Kenyan farmers remains low due to high costs. However, he believes that Chinese companies can change this by providing affordable solutions. Before purchasing machines from Sincerity, farmers receive training on usage, repair and maintenance, ensuring they can operate the equipment efficiently on their farms.

"These Chinese machines are intelligent, automated and precise, which help improve labor productivity and reduce agricultural production costs. We are very satisfied with the results," Kimani said.

XINHUA

BUSINESS



CREC4 builders conduct check on equipment before swinging the world's heaviest asymmetric curved cable-stayed bridge in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province. SHEN JIAPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Smart tech plays key role in bridge construction

By ZHUANG QIANG and PANG BO

In the prefecture-level city of Jiujiang bordering Jiangxi province's capital of Nanchang, State builders have completed the world's heaviest asymmetric curved cable-stayed bridge, which has the largest swivel weight of its kind.

Builders from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC4), working on an interchange project of the Jiujiang Fast Transit Line, successfully maneuvered two sections of the swivel cable-stayed bridge traversing Lushan railway station to final positions early Thursday.

Built in two sections, with one section weighing 41,400 metric tons and the other 47,600 tons, they were turned on two gigantic rotating devices to targeted positions and lined up as a whole, said Shi Xifeng, chief engineer of the first phase project from CREC4.

The diameters of the two rotating devices are 7.2 meters and 6.8 meters, respectively, showing the smart engineering and top skills of

Chinese builders, Shi said.

The bridge, traversing Lushan railway station — named after the world-renowned Lushan Mountain located in Jiujiang — is an asymmetric curved cable-stayed structure with the widest bridge deck and the largest swivel weight of its kind in the world, he added.

Designed as a two-way eight-lane bridge, the crossing is 465 meters long and 42 meters wide, with an 83-meter-high mother tower and a 77.5-meter-high sub-tower to support 148 intelligent anticorrosion stay cables of 74 pairs, Shi said.

The longest single stay cable will be 137.54 meters long with a weight of some 20.22 tons, and can sustain a weight of over 950 tons, he added.

The first phase of the transit line, starting from the east side of Jiujiang toll station along the Nanchang-Jiujiang Expressway — which was put into operation on Jan 28, 1996 — has a total length of 15.1 kilometers.

Starting construction on June 20, 2022, the first phase of the Jiujiang Fast Transit Line is the first viaduct

expressway in central Jiujiang. Upon completion, it will connect with the Jiujiang Yangtze River Bridge and the rapid transport network including Lushan high-speed rail station, optimizing the layout of Jiujiang's road network, said Chu Lingpeng, publicity chief of CREC4 Fifth Engineering Co Ltd, which is building the bridge.

"We are installing three magnetic flux sensors in each anchorage at the tower end for a stay cable, and there are 444 magnetic flux sensors on the whole bridge, paired with two magnetoelastic instruments for data measurement, rendering the stay cable an intelligent structure," Shi said.

"Compared with traditional cables, intelligent cables are more accurate in the tensioning process during installation, allowing timely examination and measurement during the bridge's later inspection and maintenance, and better ensuring cable force safety of the bridge," Shi added.

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MNCs applaud Henan's efforts in opening-up

Companies bullish on the Central China province; vow more investment

By SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou and PENG CHAO

Multinational corporations will further expand their presence and investment in Henan province and participate in the province's high-quality development, given its huge market potential and robust industrial development prospects amid China's high-standard opening-up, global business leaders and officials said.

They made the remarks at the 2024 Cooperation and Exchange Conference between Henan Province and Multinational Corporations, which brought together nearly 200 MNCs in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan, on Wednesday.

Tesla's Global Vice-President Tao Lin said China's high-standard opening-up brings new opportunities for MNCs, and she firmly believes that the relationship between the companies and the Chinese market should be one of value co-creation and win-win cooperation.

"Tesla's success in China is fundamentally tied to the success of the entire new energy vehicle industry. We need to grow together with all other participants to create greater development space for the industry," Tao said.

Henan boasts a significant population advantage and strong consumer power, and Tesla has set up 11 stores in the province since the company started its presence in Zhengzhou in 2018, she said.

As Henan's auto industry is undergoing a transformation toward high-end, intelligent and green development, Tesla is willing to increase its investment and

deepen cooperation and communication with all parties to support modernization of the province's auto sector system, she added.

Mu Yankui, president of Yihai Kerry Arawana Group, highlighted Henan's unique resources and market environment for grain and oil food processing enterprises as a populous region and a major grain-producing area.

Mu said the company began investing in Henan around 2000, starting with a small oil-pressing factory. Today, its presence in the province has expanded to four cities, with an annual output value of nearly 20 billion yuan (\$2.85 billion).

"Chinese consumers' health awareness is shifting from 'eating enough' to 'eating well' and further to 'eating healthily'. This trend has created new opportunities for grain and oil food processing enterprises to adjust their structure," said Mu, adding that his company has developed various kinds of functional foods and looks forward to starting production in Henan as soon as possible.

Walid Farghal, director-general of Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) Congress and secretary-general of AIM Foundation, said the United Arab Emirates and China have established a strong partnership in various fields over the years, and this cooperation has reached new heights under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Farghal said the UAE firmly supports Henan entrepreneurs' expanding their businesses to the global stage, especially in green manufacturing, renewable energy and sustainable technologies.

"The UAE will support Henan enterprises in entering the dynamic markets of regions including the Middle East and Africa."

Dominic McAllister, Britain's consul-general in Wuhan, said the cooperation between British enterprises and Henan goes back a long way, and he looks forward to learning more about the province's sustainable industrial development and is keen to explore further synergies with the United Kingdom, especially in the field of green technologies.

"China is the largest manufacturer in the world and has set its own medium- and long-term goals of reaching peak carbon before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060. The UK is keen to work with China to achieve these ambitious goals," McAllister said, adding that the hydrogen-powered manufacturing facility in Jiaozuo, Henan, jointly built by the UK's Logan Energy and Jiaozuo-based Henan Lansing, is a model for green collaboration between the two countries.

Zhang Yuxuan, Asia president of Logan Energy, said his company will bring its advanced technologies and rich experience to Henan, to develop new technical solutions and products that can serve the province's hydrogen energy sector.

Forty-six investment and trade cooperation projects worth 33.58 billion yuan and nine framework agreements were signed during the conference. These projects involve various fields such as new materials, new energy, equipment manufacturing, electronic information, modern foodstuffs and cultural tourism.

Qi Xin contributed to this story. Contact the writers at pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese Opera Culture Week hitting the right notes in Beijing

By SONG MENGXING
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The Beijing Garden Expo Park in Fengtai district is to welcome visitors to enjoy themselves at the eighth Chinese Opera Culture Week, which will kick off on Friday and last till Oct 3.

The park is expected to become an "opera paradise" and a popular destination online during the period. The event will offer visitors performances by renowned artists, rare opera genres, an amateur performance competition, interactive activities, an opera industry expo and cultural products.

This year's opera week event consists of 12 thematic activities, such as the opening ceremony, showcasing masterpieces, a gathering of noted artists from Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province, regional opera performances and academic seminars on the development of opera. Renowned opera artists such as Wang Rongrong, Du Zhenjie, Wang Hongling and Wang Ping will present their masterpieces at the opening ceremony.

The event has invited representative opera genres and rare opera genres from various provinces to be performed in Beijing. Among them are Huagu Opera from Changsha, the capital city of Central China's Hunan province, Shanghai's Huaiju Opera and Qin-qiang Opera from Northwest China's Gansu province.

Focusing on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, this year's opera week event has selected national professional opera resources to be performed in Beijing and planned the presentation of excellent productions at professional theaters in Beijing, such as Mei Lanfang Theatre and Tianqiao Theatre.

It has given special invitations to well-known troupes from Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei, including the Jingju Theater Company of Beijing, the Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre based in Beijing and Tianjin Pingju Opera Theatre,



From left: Two opera artists perform in the Beijing Garden Expo Park. A Peking Opera performer in costume. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

58
opera genres
have been showcased at the Chinese Opera Culture Week till now

330+
Number of performing groups that the opera week has invited

2,800+
Number of performances and other activities that the opera week has offered

allowing audience to watch grand performances during the opera week. Throughout the event, 48 troupes from different regions in the country will present nearly 100 performances.

The public is welcome to attend

a diverse array of specially arranged creative and exciting activities, including an opera enthusiasts competition and performances of opera groups. The competition this year is open to all opera genres, professions, ages and genders, aiming to provide a platform for enthusiasts to showcase and exchange their love for opera.

The opera group performances will introduce a new segment called the "student group competition", which plans to pick out some "future stars". These "future stars" will be on stage at the closing ceremony of the opera week, performing alongside renowned artists.

There will also be interactive activities suitable for families, including opera fashion shows, face painting and related games.

This year, a national opera art industry expo will be held during the opera week, for the first time, inviting performance associations

from various provinces nationwide to organize companies to promote, display and sell local cultural tourism projects and products. Interactive exhibition areas will be set up on-site, creating a stage for exhibitions of the culture and tourism industry, a platform for industry negotiations and transactions, and a center for innovation, research and development and incubation.

A series of "opera plus" activities are awaiting visitors to join in. They can purchase creative intangible cultural heritage products from across the country and sample specialties on a ginkgo avenue. At a quadrangle courtyard, opera culture can be viewed, performed, learned, studied and appreciated. It plans to offer things such as themed exhibitions and special courses later, to become a site for the public to appreciate, learn and promote opera.

This opera week will organize

several academic salons and discussions with the theme of "Chinese opera development experience". Renowned experts in the opera field, young scholars, professional actors and creators will communicate on the current status of opera development, and better promote the inheritance and effective development of opera.

In this opera week, distinctive spaces within the Beijing Garden Expo Park become natural stages. Walking through the park, from the classical and elegant Jiangnan waterside pavilions to the grand and magnificent northern gardens, visitors may also experience the profoundness of opera art up close in an immersive way.

Fengtai district has rich opera resources, providing important support for opera professionals with the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts and Beijing Vocational College of Opera and Arts. It is also home to major

opera troupes in Beijing such as the Jingju Theater Company of Beijing, the Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre, China Pingju Opera Theatre and Beijing Quju Opera Troupe, as well as 82 folk opera societies.

The first Beijing Opera Culture Week was held at the Beijing Garden Expo Park in May 2016, receiving an enthusiastic response. The event was upgraded to the Chinese Opera Culture Week starting from 2017, and held annually at the park.

To date, the opera week has in total invited more than 330 performing groups nationwide, showcasing a total of 58 opera genres including Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera, Pingju Opera, Quju Opera, and Huangmei Opera. It has offered 2,800-plus performances and other activities, attracting more than 940,000 live audiences, comprehensively demonstrating the country's achievements in opera culture development.